

NOVELS AND TALES
COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. CCCCIX.

NOVELS AND TALES.

VOL. V.

COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS

FOR EXCISE

NOTES AND TABLES

FOR

122-98

NOVELS AND TALES

REPRINTED FROM

HOUSEHOLD WORDS

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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VOL. V.

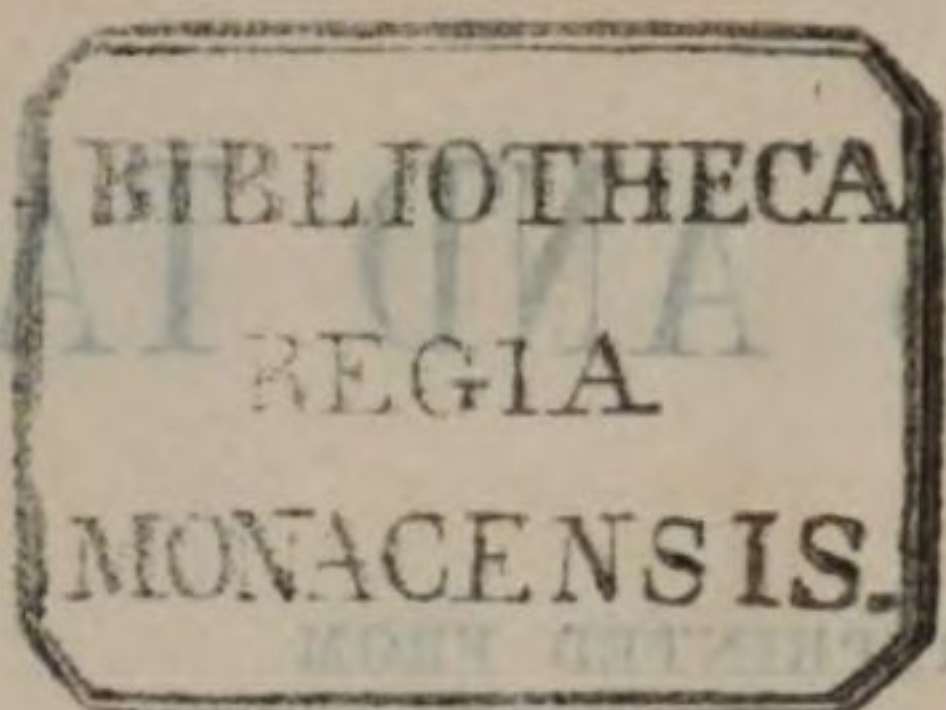
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HOUSEHOLD WORDS

EDITED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

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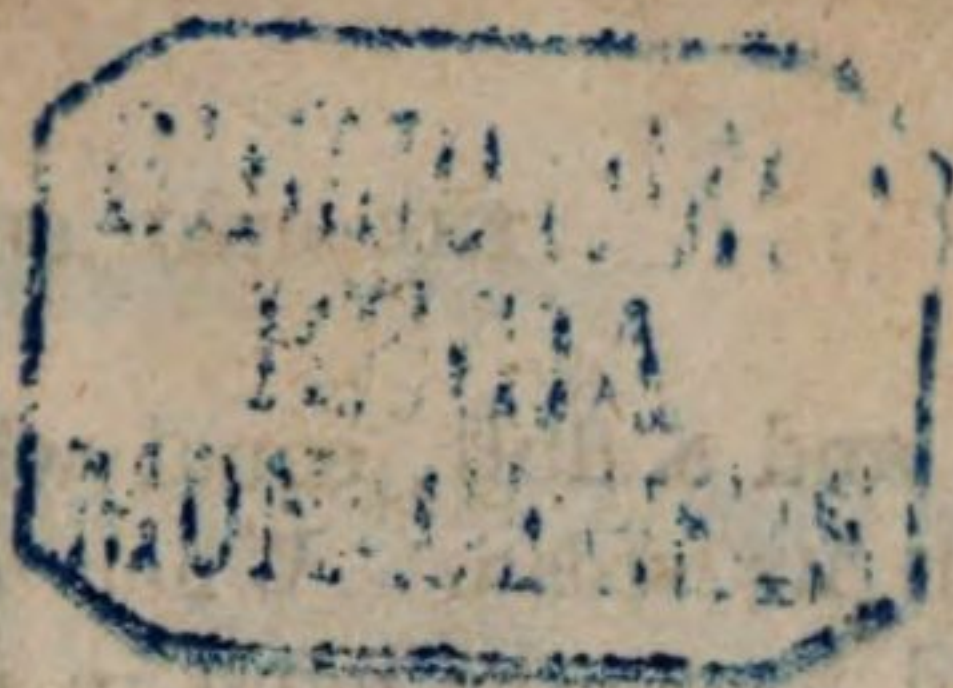
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NOVELS AND TALES.

VOL. V.

THE DEAD SECRET.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Telling of the Secret.

FOLD by fold Rosamond opened the paper, and saw that there were written characters inside it, traced in ink that had faded to a light yellow hue. She smoothed it out carefully on the table — then took it up again, and looked at the first line of the writing.

The first line contained only three words — words which told her that the paper with the writing on it was not a description of a picture, but a letter; — words which made her start and change colour, the moment her eye fell upon them. Without attempting to read any further, she hastily turned over the leaf to find out the place where the writing ended.

It ended at the bottom of the third page; but there was a break in the lines, near the foot of the second page, and in that break there were two names signed. She looked at the uppermost of the two — started again — and turned back instantly to the first page.

Line by line, and word by word, she read through the writing; her natural complexion fading out gradually

the while, and a dull, equal whiteness overspreading all her face in its stead. When she had come to the end of the third page, the hand in which she held the letter dropped to her side, and she turned her head slowly towards Leonard. In that position she stood, — no tears moistening her eyes, no change passing over her features, no word escaping her lips, no movement varying the position of her limbs — in that position she stood, with the fatal letter crumpled up in her cold fingers, looking steadfastly, speechlessly, breathlessly at her blind husband.

He was still sitting as she had seen him a few minutes before, with his legs crossed, his hands clasped together in front of them, and his head turned expectantly in the direction in which he had last heard the sound of his wife's voice. But, in a few moments, the intense stillness in the room forced itself upon his attention. He changed his position — listened for a little, turning his head uneasily from side to side — and then called to his wife.

“Rosamond!”

At the sound of his voice her lips moved, and her fingers closed faster on the paper that they held; but she neither stepped forward nor spoke.

“Rosamond!”

Her lips moved again — faint traces of expression began to pass shadow-like over the blank whiteness of her face — she advanced one step, hesitated, looked at the letter, and stopped.

Hearing no answer, he rose surprised and uneasy. Moving his poor helpless, wandering hands to and fro before him in the air, he walked forward a few paces, straight out from the wall against which he had been

sitting. A chair, which his hands were not held low enough to touch, stood in his way; and, as he still advanced, he struck his knee sharply against it.

A cry burst from Rosamond's lips, as if the pain of the blow had passed, at the instant of its infliction, from her husband to herself. She was by his side in a moment. "You are not hurt, Lenny?" she said, faintly.

"No, no." He tried to press his hand on the place where he had struck himself, but she knelt down quickly, and put her own hand there instead; nestling her head against him, while she was on her knees, in a strangely hesitating, timid way. He lightly laid the hand which she had intercepted on her shoulder. The moment it touched her, her eyes began to soften; the tears rose in them, and fell slowly one by one down her cheeks.

"I thought you had left me," he said. "There was such a silence that I fancied you had gone out of the room."

"Will you come out of it with me, now?" Her strength seemed to fail her, while she asked the question; her head drooped on her breast, and she let the letter fall on the floor at her side.

"Are you tired already, Rosamond? Your voice sounds as if you were."

"I want to leave the room," she said, still in the same low, faint, constrained tone. "Is your knee easier, dear? Can you walk, now?"

"Certainly. There is nothing in the world the matter with my knee. If you are tired, Rosamond — as I know you are, though you may not confess it — the sooner we leave the room the better."

She appeared not to hear the last words he said. Her fingers were working feverishly about her neck and

bosom; two bright, red spots were beginning to burn in her pale cheeks; her eyes were fixed vacantly on the letter at her side; her hands wavered about it before she picked it up. For a few seconds, she waited on her knees, looking at it intently, with her head turned away from her husband — then rose and walked to the fireplace. Among the dust, ashes, and other rubbish at the back of the grate were scattered some old, torn pieces of paper. They caught her eye, and held it fixed on them. She looked and looked, slowly bending down nearer and nearer to the grate. For one moment she held the letter out over the rubbish in both hands — the next she drew back, shuddering violently, and turned round so as to face her husband again. At the sight of him, a faint, inarticulate exclamation, half sigh, half sob, burst from her. “Oh, no, no!” she whispered to herself, clasping her hands together, fervently, and looking at him with fond, mournful eyes. “Never, never, Lenny — come of it what may!”

“Were you speaking to me, Rosamond?”

“Yes, love. I was saying —” She paused, and, with trembling fingers, folded up the paper again, exactly in the form in which she had found it.

“Where are you?” he asked. “Your voice sounds away from me, at the other end of the room again. Where are you?”

She ran to him, flushed, and trembling, and tearful; took him by the arm; and, without an instant of hesitation, without the faintest sign of irresolution in her face, placed the folded paper boldly in his hand. “Keep that, Lenny,” she said, turning deadly pale, but still not losing her firmness. “Keep that, and ask me to read it to you as soon as we are out of the Myrtle Room.”

"What is it?" he asked.

"The last thing I have found, love," she replied, looking at him earnestly, with a deep sigh of relief.

"Is it of any importance?"

Instead of answering, she suddenly caught him to her bosom, clung to him with all the fervour of her impulsive nature, and breathlessly and passionately covered his face with kisses.

"Gently! gently!" said Leonard, laughing. "You take away my breath."

She drew back, and stood looking at him in silence, with a hand laid on each of his shoulders. "Oh, my angel!" she murmured tenderly. "I would give all I have in the world, if I could only know how much you love me!"

"Surely," he returned, still laughing, "surely, Rosamond, you ought to know by this time!"

"I shall know soon." She spoke those words in tones so quiet and low that they were barely audible. Interpreting the change in her voice as a fresh indication of fatigue, Leonard invited her to lead him away by holding out his hand. She took it in silence, and guided him slowly to the door.

On their way back to the inhabited side of the house, she said nothing more on the subject of the folded piece of paper which she had placed in his hands. All her attention, while they were returning to the west front, seemed to be absorbed in the one act of jealously watching every inch of ground that he walked over, to make sure that it was safe and smooth before she suffered him to set his foot on it. Careful and considerate as she had always been, from the first day of their married life, whenever she led him from one place to another, she

was now unduly, almost absurdly, anxious to preserve him from the remotest possibility of an accident. Finding that he was the nearest to the outside of the open landing, when they left the Myrtle Room, she insisted on changing places, so that he might be nearest to the wall. While they were descending the stairs, she stopped him in the middle, to enquire if he felt any pain in the knee which he had struck against the chair. At the last step she brought him to a stand-still again, while she moved away the torn and tangled remains of an old mat, for fear one of his feet should catch in it. Walking across the north hall, she entreated that he would take her arm and lean heavily upon her, because she felt sure that his knee was not quite free from stiffness yet. Even at the short flight of stairs which connected the entrance to the hall with the passages leading to the west side of the house, she twice stopped him on the way down, to place his foot on the sound parts of the steps, which she represented as dangerously worn away in more places than one. He laughed good-humouredly at her excessive anxiety to save him from all danger of stumbling, and asked if there was any likelihood, with their numerous stoppages, of getting back to the west side of the house in time for lunch. She was not ready, as usual, with her retort; his laugh found no pleasant echo in hers: she only answered that it was impossible to be too anxious about him; and then went on in silence, till they reached the door of the housekeeper's room.

Leaving him for a moment outside, she went in to give the keys back again to Mrs. Pentreath.

"Dear me, ma'am!" exclaimed the housekeeper, "you look quite overcome by the heat of the day, and the

close air of those old rooms. Can I get you a glass of water, or may I give you my bottle of salts?"

Rosamond declined both offers.

"May I be allowed to ask, ma'am, if anything has been found this time in the north rooms?" inquired Mrs. Pentreath, hanging up the bunch of keys.

"Only some old papers," replied Rosamond, turning away.

"I beg pardon, again, ma'am," pursued the housekeeper; "but, in case any of the gentry of the neighbourhood should call to-day?"

"We are engaged. No matter who it may be, we are both engaged." Answering briefly in these terms, Rosamond left Mrs. Pentreath, and rejoined her husband.

With the same excess of attention and care which she had shown on the way to the housekeeper's room, she now led him up the west staircase. The library door happening to stand open, they passed through it on their way to the drawing-room, which was the larger and cooler apartment of the two. Having guided Leonard to a seat, Rosamond returned to the library, and took from the table a tray containing a bottle of water, and a tumbler, which she had noticed when she passed through.

"I may feel faint as well as frightened," she said quickly to herself, turning round with the tray in her hand to return to the drawing-room.

After she had put the water down on a table in a corner, she noiselessly locked first the door leading into the library, then the door leading into the passage. Leonard, hearing her moving about, advised her to keep quiet on the sofa. She patted him gently on the cheek,

and was about to make some suitable answer, when she accidentally beheld her face reflected in the looking-glass under which he was sitting. The sight of her own white cheeks and startled eyes suspended the words on her lips. She hastened away to the window, to catch any breath of air that might be wafted towards her from the sea.

The heat-mist still hid the horizon. Nearer, the oily, colourless surface of the water was just visible, heaving slowly from time to time in one vast monotonous wave that rolled itself out smoothly and endlessly till it was lost in the white obscurity of the mist. Close on the shore, the noisy surf was hushed. No sound came from the beach except at long, wearily long intervals, when a quick thump, and a still splash, just audible and no more, announced the fall of one tiny, mimic wave upon the parching sand. On the terrace in front of the house, the changeless hum of summer insects was all that told of life and movement. Not a human figure was to be seen anywhere on the shore; no sign of a sail loomed shadowy through the heat at sea; no breath of air waved the light tendrils of the creepers that twined up the house-wall, or refreshed the drooping flowers ranged in the windows. Rosamond turned away from the outer prospect, after a moment's weary contemplation of it. As she looked into the room again, her husband spoke to her.

"What precious thing lies hidden in this paper?" he asked, producing the letter, and smiling as he opened it. "Surely there must be something besides writing — some inestimable powder, or some bank-note of fabulous value — wrapped up in all these folds?"

Rosamond's heart sank within her, as he opened the letter and passed his finger over the writing inside, with

a mock expression of anxiety, and a light jest about sharing all treasures discovered at Porthgenna with his wife.

"I will read it to you directly, Lenny," she said, dropping into the nearest seat, and languidly pushing her hair back from her temples. "But put it away for a few minutes now, and let us talk of anything else you like that does not remind us of the Myrtle Room. I am very capricious, am I not, to be so suddenly weary of the very subject that I have been fondest of talking about for so many weeks past? Tell me, love," she added, rising abruptly and going to the back of his chair; "do I get worse with my whims and fancies and faults? — or am I improved, since the time when we were first married?"

He tossed the letter aside carelessly on a table which was always placed by the arm of his chair, and shook his forefinger at her with a frown of comic reproof. "Oh fie, Rosamond! are you trying to entrap me into paying you compliments?"

The light tone that he persisted in adopting seemed absolutely to terrify her. She shrank away from his chair, and sat down again at a little distance from him.

"I remember I used to offend you," she continued quickly and confusedly. "No, no, not to offend — only to vex you a little — by talking too familiarly to the servants. You might almost have fancied, at first, if you had not known me so well, that it was habit with me because I had once been a servant myself. Suppose I had been a servant — the servant who had helped to nurse you in your illnesses, the servant who led you about in your blindness more carefully than anyone else

— would you have thought much, then, of the difference between us? would you —”

She stopped. The smile had vanished from Leonard's face, and he had turned a little away from her. “What is the use, Rosamond, of supposing events that never could have happened?” he asked rather impatiently.

She went to the side-table, poured out some of the water she had brought from the library, and drank it eagerly; then walked to the window and plucked a few of the flowers that were placed there. She threw some of them away again the next moment; but kept the rest in her hand, thoughtfully arranging them so as to contrast their colours with the effect. When this was done, she put them into her bosom, looked down absently at them, took them out again, and returning to her husband, placed the little nosegay in the button-hole of his coat.

“Something to make you look gay and bright, love — as I always wish to see you,” she said, seating herself in her favourite attitude at his feet, and looking up at him sadly, with her arms resting on his knees.

“What are you thinking about, Rosamond?” he asked, after an interval of silence.

“I was only wondering, Lenny, whether any woman in the world could be as fond of you as I am. I feel almost afraid that there are others who would ask nothing better than to live and die for you, as well as me. There is something in your face, in your voice, in all your ways — something besides the interest of your sad, sad affliction — that would draw any woman's heart to you, I think. If I was to die —”

“If you were to die!” He started as he repeated the words after her, and, leaning forward, anxiously laid

his hand upon her forehead. "You are thinking and talking very strangely this morning, Rosamond! Are you not well?"

She rose on her knees and looked closer at him, her face brightening a little, and a faint smile just playing round her lips. "I wonder if you will always be as anxious about me, and as fond of me, as you are now!" she whispered, kissing his hand as she removed it from her forehead. He leaned back again in the chair, and told her jestingly not to look too far into the future. The words, lightly as they were spoken, struck deep into her heart. "There are times, Lenny," she said, "when all one's happiness in the present depends upon one's certainty of the future." She looked at the letter, which her husband had left open on the table near him, as she spoke; and, after a momentary struggle with herself, took it in her hand to read it. At the first word her voice failed her; the deadly paleness overspread her face again; she threw the letter back on the table, and walked away to the other end of the room.

"The future?" asked Leonard. "What future, Rosamond, can you possibly mean?"

"Suppose I meant our future at Porthgenna?" she said, moistening her dry lips with a few drops of water. "Shall we stay here as long as we thought we should, and be as happy as we have been everywhere else? You told me on the journey that I should find it dull, and that I should be driven to try all sorts of extraordinary occupations to amuse myself. You said you expected that I should begin with gardening and end by writing a novel. A novel!" She approached her husband again, and watched his face eagerly while she went on. "Why not? More women write novels now than

men. What is to prevent me from trying? The first great requisite, I suppose, is to have an idea of a story; and that I have got." She advanced a few steps further, reached the table on which the letter lay, and placed her hand on it, keeping her eyes still fixed intently on Leonard's face.

"And what is your idea, Rosamond?" he asked.

"This," she replied. "I mean to make the main interest of the story centre in two young married people. They shall be very fond of each other — as fond as we are, Lenny — and they shall be in our rank of life. After they have been happily married some time, and when they have got one child to make them love each other more dearly than ever, a terrible discovery shall fall upon them like a thunderbolt. The husband shall have chosen for his wife a young lady bearing as ancient a family name as —"

"As your name?" suggested Leonard.

"As the name of the Treverton family," she continued, after a pause, during which her hand had been restlessly moving the letter to and fro on the table. "The husband shall be well-born — as well-born as you, Lenny — and the terrible discovery shall be, that his wife has no right to the ancient name that she bore when he married her."

"I can't say, my love, that I approve of your idea. Your story will decoy the reader into feeling an interest in a woman who turns out to be an impostor."

"No!" cried Rosamond, warmly. "A true woman — a woman who never stooped to a deception — a woman full of faults and failings, but a teller of the truth at all hazards and all sacrifices. Hear me out, Lenny, before you judge." Hot tears rushed into her

eyes; but she dashed them away passionately, and went on. "The wife shall grow up to womanhood, and shall marry, in total ignorance — mind that! — in total ignorance of her real history. The sudden disclosure of the truth shall overwhelm her — she shall find herself struck by a calamity which she had no hand in bringing about. She shall be crushed, petrified, staggered in her very reason by the discovery; it shall burst upon her when she has no one but herself to depend on; she shall have the power of keeping it a secret from her husband with perfect impunity; she shall be tried, she shall be shaken in her mortal frailness, by one moment of fearful temptation; she shall conquer it, and, of her own free will, she shall tell her husband all that she knows herself. Now, Lenny, what do you call that woman? an impostor?"

"No: a victim."

"Who goes of her own accord to the sacrifice? and who is to be sacrificed?"

"I did not say that."

"What would you do with her, Lenny, if you were writing the story? I mean, how would you make her husband behave to her? It is a question in which a man's nature is concerned, and a woman is not competent to decide it. I am perplexed about how to end the story. How would you end it, love?" As she ceased, her voice sank sadly to its gentlest pleading tones. She came close to him, and twined her fingers in his hair fondly. "How would you end it, love?" she repeated, stooping down till her trembling lips just touched his forehead.

He moved uneasily in his chair, and replied, "I am not a writer of novels, Rosamond."

"But how would you act, Lenny, if you were that husband?"

"It is hard for me to say," he answered. "I have not your vivid imagination, my dear: I have no power of putting myself, at a moment's notice, into a position that is not my own, and of knowing how I should act in it."

"But suppose your wife was close to you — as close as I am now? Suppose she had just told you the dreadful secret, and was standing before you — as I am standing now — with the happiness of her whole life to come depending on one kind word from your lips? Oh, Lenny, you would not let her drop broken-hearted at your feet? You would know, let her birth be what it might, that she was still the same faithful creature who had cherished, and served, and trusted, and worshipped you since her marriage-day, and who asked nothing in return but to lay her head on your bosom, and to hear you say that you loved her? You would know that she had nerved herself to tell the fatal secret, because in her loyalty and love to her husband, she would rather die forsaken and despised, than live, deceiving him? You would know all this, and you would open your arms to the mother of your child, to the wife of your first love, though she was the lowliest of all lowly-born women in the estimation of the world? Oh, you would, Lenny; I know you would!"

"Rosamond! how your hands tremble; how your voice alters! You are agitating yourself about this supposed story of yours, as if you were talking of real events."

"You would take her to your heart, Lenny? You would open your arms to her without an instant of unworthy doubt?"

"Hush! hush! I hope I should."

"Hope? only hope? Oh, think again, love, think again; and say you *know* you should!"

"Must I, Rosamond? Then I do say it."

She drew back as the words passed his lips, and took the letter from the table.

"You have not yet asked me, Lenny, to read the letter that I found in the Myrtle Room. I offer to read it now, of my own accord." She trembled a little as she spoke those few decisive words, but her utterance of them was clear and steady, as if her consciousness of being now irrevocably pledged to make the disclosure, had strengthened her at last to dare all hazards and end all suspense.

Her husband turned towards the place from which the sound of her voice had reached him, with a mixed expression of perplexity and surprise in his face. "You pass so suddenly from one subject to another," he said, "that I hardly know how to follow you. What in the world, Rosamond, takes you, at one jump, from a romantic argument about a situation in a novel, to the plain, practical business of reading an old letter?"

"Perhaps there is a closer connection between the two, than you suspect," she answered.

"A closer connection? What connection? I don't understand."

"The letter will explain."

"Why the letter? Why should *you* not explain?"

She stole one anxious look at his face, and saw that a sense of something serious to come was now overshadowing his mind for the first time.

"Rosamond!" he exclaimed, "there is some mystery —"

"There are no mysteries between us two," she interposed quickly. "There never have been any, love; there never shall be." She moved a little nearer to him to take her old favourite place on his knee, then checked herself, and drew back again to the table. Warning tears in her eyes bade her distrust her own firmness, and read the letter where she could not feel the beating of his heart.

"Did I tell you," she resumed, after waiting an instant to compose herself, "where I found the folded piece of paper which I put into your hand in the Myrtle Room?"

"No," he replied, "I think not."

"I found it at the back of the frame of that picture — the picture of the ghostly woman with the wicked face. I opened it immediately, and saw that it was a letter. The address inside, the first line under it, and one of the two signatures which it contained were in a handwriting that I knew."

"Whose?"

"The handwriting of the late Mrs. Treverton."

"Of your mother?"

"Of the late Mrs. Treverton."

"Gracious God, Rosamond! why do you speak of her in that way?"

"Let me read, and you will know. I would rather read it than tell it. You have seen, with my eyes, what the Myrtle Room is like; you have seen, with my eyes, every object which the search through it brought to light; you must now see, with my eyes, what this letter contains. It is the Secret of the Myrtle Room."

She bent close over the faint, faded writing, and read these words: —

"To my husband, —

"We have parted, Arthur, for ever, and I have not had the courage to embitter our farewell by confessing that I have deceived you — cruelly and basely deceived you. But a few minutes since, you were weeping by my bedside, and speaking of our child. My wronged, my beloved husband, the little daughter of your heart is not yours, is not mine. She is a love-child, whom I have imposed on you for mine. Her father was a miner at Porthgenna, her mother is my maid, Sarah Leeson."

Rosamond paused, but never raised her head from the letter. She heard her husband lay his hand suddenly on the table; she heard him start to his feet; she heard him draw his breath heavily in one quick gasp; she heard him whisper to himself the instant after, "A love-child!" With a fearful, painful distinctness she heard those three words. The tone in which he whispered them turned her cold. But she never moved, for there was more to read; and while more remained, if her life had depended on it, she could not have looked up.

In a moment more she went on, and read these lines next: —

"I have many heavy sins to answer for, but this one sin you must pardon, Arthur; for I committed it through fondness for you. That fondness told me a secret which you sought to hide from me. That fondness told me that your barren wife would never make your heart all her own until she had borne you a child; and your lips proved it true. Your first words, when you came back from sea, and when the infant was placed in your arms, were: — 'I have never loved you, Rosamond, as I love

you now.' If you had not said that, I should never have kept my guilty secret.

"I can add no more, for death is very near me. How the fraud was committed, and what my other motives were, I must leave you to discover from the mother of the child, who is charged to give you this. You will be merciful to the poor little creature who bears my name, I know. Be merciful also to her unhappy parent: she is only guilty of too blindly obeying me. If there is anything that mitigates the bitterness of my remorse, it is the remembrance that my act of deceit saved the most faithful and the most affectionate of women from shame that she had not deserved. Remember me forgivingly, Arthur — words may tell how I have sinned against you; no words can tell how I have loved you!"

She had struggled on thus far, and had reached the last line on the second page of the letter, when she paused again, and then tried to read the first of the two signatures — "Rosamond Treverton." She faintly repeated two syllables of that familiar Christian name — the name that was on her husband's lips every hour of the day! — and struggled to articulate the third, but her voice failed her. All the sacred household memories which that ruthless letter had profaned for ever, seemed to tear themselves away from her heart at the same moment. With a low, moaning cry, she dropped her arms on the table, and laid her head down on them, and hid her face.

She heard nothing, she was conscious of nothing, until she felt a touch on her shoulder — a light touch from a hand that trembled. Every pulse in her body bounded in answer to it, and she looked up.

Her husband had guided himself near to her by the table. The tears were glistening in his dim, sightless eyes. As she rose and touched him, his arms opened, and closed fast round her.

"My own Rosamond!" he said, "come to me and be comforted!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

Uncle Joseph.

THE day and the night had passed, and the new morning had come, before the husband and wife could trust themselves to speak calmly of the Secret, and to face resignedly the duties and the sacrifices which the discovery of it imposed on them.

Leonard's first question referred to those lines in the letter, which Rosamond had informed him were in a handwriting that she knew. Finding that he was at a loss to understand what means she could have of forming an opinion on this point, she explained that, after Captain Treverton's death, many letters had naturally fallen into her possession which had been written by Mrs. Treverton to her husband. They treated of ordinary domestic subjects, and she had read them often enough to become thoroughly acquainted with the peculiarities of Mrs. Treverton's handwriting. It was remarkably large, firm, and masculine in character; and the address, the line under it, and the upper-most of the two signatures in the letter which had been found in the Myrtle Room, exactly resembled it in every particular.

The next question related to the body of the letter. The writing of this, of the second signature ("Sarah Leeson"), and of the additional lines on the third page,

also signed by Sarah Leeson, proclaimed itself in each case to be the production of the same person. While stating that fact to her husband, Rosamond did not forget to explain to him that, while reading the letter on the previous day, her strength and courage had failed her before she got to the end of it. She added that the postscript which she had thus omitted to read, was of importance, because it mentioned the circumstances under which the secret had been hidden, and begged that he would listen while she made him acquainted with his contents without any further delay.

Sitting as close to his side, now, as if they were enjoying their first honeymoon-days over again, she read these last lines — the lines which her mother had written sixteen years before, on the morning when she fled from Porthgenna Tower.

“If this paper should ever be found (which I pray with my whole heart it never may be), I wish to state that I have come to the resolution of hiding it, because I dare not show the writing that it contains to my master, to whom it is addressed. In doing what I now propose to do, though I am acting against my mistress’s last wishes, I am not breaking the solemn engagement which she obliged me to make before her on her death-bed. That engagement forbids me to destroy this letter, or to take it away with me if I leave the house. I shall do neither, — my purpose is to conceal it in the place, of all others, where I think there is least chance of its ever being found again. Any hardship or misfortune which may follow as a consequence of this deceitful proceeding on my part, will fall on myself. Others, I believe, on my conscience, will be the happier for the hiding of the dreadful secret which this letter contains.”

"There can be no doubt, now," said Leonard, when his wife had read to the end; "Mrs. Jazeph, Sarah Leeson, and the servant who disappeared from Porthgenna Tower, are one and the same person."

"Poor creature!" said Rosamond, sighing as she put down the letter. "We know now why she warned me so anxiously not to go into the Myrtle Room. Who can say what she must have suffered when she came as a stranger to my bed-side? Oh, what would I not give if I had been less hasty with her! It is dreadful to remember that I spoke to her as a servant whom I expected to obey me; it is worse still to feel that I cannot, even now, think of her as a child should think of a mother. How can I ever tell her that I know the secret? how—" She paused, with a heart-sick consciousness of the slur that was cast on her birth; she paused, shrinking as she thought of the name that her husband had given to her, and of her own parentage, which the laws of society disdained to recognise.

"Why do you stop?" asked Leonard.

"I was afraid —" she began, and paused again.

"Afraid," he said, finishing the sentence for her, "that words of pity for that unhappy woman might wound my sensitive pride, by reminding me of the circumstances of your birth? Rosamond, I should be unworthy of your matchless truthfulness towards me, if I, on my side, did not acknowledge that this discovery *has* wounded me as only a proud man can be wounded. My pride has been born and bred in me. My pride, even while I am now speaking to you, takes advantage of my first moments of composure, and deludes me into doubting, in the face of all probability, whether the words you have read to me, can, after all, be words of truth.

But, strong as that inborn and inbred feeling is — hard as it may be for me to discipline and master it as I ought, and must, and will, — there is another feeling in my heart that is stronger yet.” He felt for her hand, and took it in his; then added: “From the hour when you first devoted your life to your blind husband, — from the hour when you won all his gratitude, as you had already won all his love, you took a place in his heart, Rosamond, from which nothing, not even such a shock as has now assailed us, can move you! High as I have always held the worth of rank in my estimation, I have learnt, even before the event of yesterday, to hold the worth of my wife, let her parentage be what it may, higher still.”

“Oh, Lenny, Lenny, I can’t hear you praise me, if you talk in the same breath as if I had made a sacrifice in marrying you! But for my blind husband I might never have deserved what you have just said of me. When I first read that fearful letter, I had one moment of vile ungrateful doubt if your love for me would hold out against the discovery of the secret. I had one moment of horrible temptation that drew me away from you when I ought to have put the letter into your hand. It was the sight of you, waiting for me to speak again, so innocent of all knowledge of what had happened close by you, that brought me back to my senses, and told me what I ought to do. It was the sight of my blind husband that made me conquer the temptation to destroy that letter in the first hour of discovering it. Oh, if I had been the hardest-hearted of women, could I have ever taken your hand again — could I kiss you, could I lie down by your side, and hear you fall asleep, night after night, feeling that I had abused your blind de-

pendence on me to serve my own selfish interests? knowing that I had only succeeded in my deceit because your affliction made you incapable of suspecting deception? No, no; I can hardly believe that the basest of women could be guilty of such baseness as that; and I can claim nothing more for myself than the credit of having been true to my trust. You said yesterday, love, in the Myrtle Room, that the one faithful friend to you in your blindness who never failed, was your wife. It is reward enough and consolation enough for me, now that the worst is over, to know that you can say so still."

"Yes, Rosamond, the worst is over; but we must not forget that there may be hard trials still to meet."

"Hard trials, love? To what trials do you refer?"

"Perhaps, Rosamond, I over-rate the courage that the sacrifice demands; but, to *me*, at least, it will be a hard sacrifice of my own feelings to make strangers partakers in the knowledge of the secret that we now possess."

Rosamond looked at her husband in astonishment. "Why need we tell the secret to anyone?" she asked.

"Assuming that we can satisfy ourselves of the genuineness of that letter," he answered, "we shall have no choice but to tell the secret to strangers. You cannot forget the circumstances under which your father — under which Captain Treverton —"

"Call him my father," said Rosamond sadly. "Remember how he loved me, and how I loved him, and say 'my father,' still."

"I am afraid I must say 'Captain Treverton' now," returned Leonard, "or I shall hardly be able to explain simply and plainly what it is very necessary that you should know. Captain Treverton died without leaving a

will. His only property was the purchase-money of this house and estate; and you inherited it, as his next of kin —”

Rosamond started back in her chair and clasped her hands in dismay. “Oh, Lenny,” she said simply. “I have thought so much of *you*, since I found the letter, that I never remembered this!”

“It is time to remember it, my love. If you are not Captain Treverton’s daughter you have no right to one farthing of the fortune that you possess; and it must be restored at once to the person who *is* Captain Treverton’s next of kin — or, in other words, to his brother.”

“To that man!” exclaimed Rosamond. “To that man who is a stranger to us, who holds our very name in contempt! Are we to be made poor that he may be made rich? —”

“We are to do what is honourable and just, at any sacrifice of our own interests and ourselves,” said Leonard firmly. “I believe, Rosamond, that my consent, as your husband, is necessary, according to the law, to effect this restitution. If Mr. Andrew Treverton was the bitterest enemy I had on earth, and if the restoring of this money utterly ruined us both in our worldly circumstances, I would give it back of my own accord to the last farthing; I would give it back without an instant’s hesitation — and so would you!”

The blood mantled in his cheeks as he spoke. Rosamond looked at him admiringly in silence. “Who would have had him less proud,” she thought fondly, “when his pride speaks in such words as those!”

“You understand now,” continued Leonard, “that we have duties to perform which will oblige us to seek help from others, and which will therefore render it impossible

to keep the secret to ourselves? If we search all England for her, Sarah Leeson must be found. Our future actions depend upon her answers to our inquiries, upon her testimony to the genuineness of that letter. Although I am resolved beforehand to shield myself behind no technical quibbles and delays — although I want nothing but evidence that is morally conclusive, however legally imperfect it may be — it is still impossible to proceed without seeking advice immediately. The lawyer who always managed Captain Treverton's affairs, and who now manages ours, is the proper person to direct us in instituting the search; and to assist us, if necessary, in making the restitution."

"How quietly and firmly you speak of it, Lenny! Will not the abandoning of my fortune be a dreadful loss to us?"

"We must think of it as a gain to our consciences, Rosamond; and must alter our way of life resignedly to suit our altered means. But we need speak no more of that until we are assured of the necessity of restoring the money. My immediate anxiety, and your immediate anxiety, must turn now on the discovery of Sarah Leeson — no! on the discovery of your mother; I must learn to call her by that name, or I shall not learn to pity and forgive her."

Rosamond nestled closer to her husband's side. "Every word you say, love, does my heart good," she whispered, laying her head on his shoulder. "You will help me and strengthen me when the time comes to meet my mother as I ought? O, how pale and worn and weary she was when she stood by my bedside, and looked at me and my child! Will it be long before we find her? Is she far away from us, I wonder? or nearer, much nearer, than we think?"

Before Leonard could answer, he was interrupted by a knock at the door, and Rosamond was surprised by the appearance of the maid servant. Betsey was flushed, excited, and out of breath; but she contrived to deliver intelligibly a brief message from Mr. Munder, the steward, requesting permission to speak to Mr. Frankland or to Mrs. Frankland on business of importance.

"What is it? What does he want?" asked Rosamond.

"I think, ma'am, he wants to know whether he had better send for the constable or not," answered Betsey.

"Send for the constable!" repeated Rosamond. "Are there thieves in the house in broad daylight?"

"Mr. Munder says he don't know but what it may be worse than thieves," replied Betsey. "It's the foreigner again, if you please, ma'am. He come up and rung at the door as bold as brass, and asked if he could see Mrs. Frankland."

"The foreigner!" exclaimed Rosamond, laying her hand eagerly on her husband's arm.

"Yes, ma'am," said Betsey. "Him as come here to go over the house along with the lady —"

Rosamond, with characteristic impulsiveness, started to her feet. "Let me go down!" she began.

"Wait," interposed Leonard, catching her by the hand. "There is not the least need for you to go down stairs. Show the foreigner up here," he continued, addressing himself to Betsey, "and tell Mr. Munder that we will take the management of this business into our own hands."

Rosamond sat down again by her husband's side. "This is a very strange accident," she said, in a low, serious tone. "It must be something more than mere

chance that puts the clue into our hands at the moment when we least expected to find it."

The door opened for the second time, and there appeared, modestly, on the threshold, a little old man, with rosy cheeks and long white hair. A small leather case was slung by a strap at his side, and the stem of a pipe peeped out of the breast-pocket of his coat. He advanced one step into the room, stopped, raised both his hands with his felt hat crumpled up in them to his heart, and made five fantastic bows in quick succession — two to Mrs. Frankland two to her husband, and one to Mrs. Frankland, again, as an act of separate and special homage to the lady. Never had Rosamond seen a more complete embodiment in human form of perfect innocence and perfect harmlessness, than the foreigner who was described in the house-keeper's letter as an audacious vagabond, and who was dreaded by Mr. Munder as something worse than a thief!

"Madam, and good sir," said the old man, advancing a little nearer at Mrs. Frankland's invitation, "I ask your pardon for intruding myself. My name is Joseph Buschmann. I live in the town of Truro, where I work in cabinets and tea-caddies, and other shining woods. I am also, if you please, the same little foreign man who was scolded by the big major-domo when I came to see the house. All that I ask of your kindness is, that you will let me say for my errand here and for myself, and for another person who is very near to my love, — one little word. I will be but few minutes, madam and good sir, and then I will go my ways again with my best wishes and my best thanks."

"Pray consider, Mr. Buschmann, that our time is your time," said Leonard. "We have no engagement what-

ever which need oblige you to shorten your visit. I must tell you, beforehand, in order to prevent any embarrassment on either side, that I have the misfortune to be blind. I can promise you, however, my best attention as far as listening goes. Rosamond, is Mr. Buschmann seated?"

Mr. Buschmann was still standing near the door, and was expressing sympathy by bowing to Mr. Frankland again, and crumpling his felt hat once more over his heart.

"Pray come nearer, and sit down," said Rosamond. "And don't imagine for one moment that any opinion of the steward's has the least influence on us, or that we feel it at all necessary for you to apologise for what took place the last time you came to this house. We have an interest — a very great interest," she added, with her usual hearty frankness, "in hearing anything that you have to tell us. You are the person of all others whom we are, just at this time —" She stopped, feeling her foot touched by her husband's, and rightly interpreting the action as a warning not to speak too unrestrainedly to the visitor before he had explained his object in coming to the house.

Looking very much pleased, and a little surprised also, when he heard Rosamond's last words, Uncle Joseph drew a chair near to the table by which Mr. and Mrs. Frankland were sitting, crumpled his felt hat up smaller than ever and put it in one of his side pockets, drew from the other a little packet of letters, placed them on his knees as he sat down, patted them gently with both hands, and entered on his explanation in these terms: —

"Madam and good sir," he began, "before I can say

comfortably my little word, I must, with your leave, travel backwards to the last time when I came to this house in company with my niece."

"Your niece!" exclaimed Rosamond and Leonard, both speaking together.

"My niece, Sarah," said Uncle Joseph, "the only child of my sister, Agatha. It is for the love of Sarah, if you please, that I am here now. She is the one last morsel of my flesh and blood that is left to me in the world. The rest, they are all gone! My wife, my little Joseph, my brother Max, my sister Agatha, and the husband she married, the good and noble Englishman, Leeson — they are all, all gone!"

"Leeson," said Rosamond, pressing her husband's hand significantly under the table. "Your niece's name is Sarah Leeson?"

Uncle Joseph sighed and shook his head. "One day," he said, "of all the days in the year the evilmost for Sarah, she changed that name. Of the man she married — who is dead, now, Madam — it is little or nothing that I know but this: — His name was Jazeph, and he used her ill, for which I think him the First Scoundrel! Yes," exclaimed Uncle Joseph, with the nearest approach to anger and bitterness which his nature was capable of making, and with an idea that he was using one of the strongest superlatives in the language. "Yes! if he was to come to life again at this very moment of time, I would say it of him to his face: — Englishman Jazeph, you are the First Scoundrel!"

Rosamond pressed her husband's hand for the second time. If their own convictions had not already identified Mrs. Jazeph with Sarah Leeson, the old man's last

words must have amply sufficed to assure them, that both names had been borne by the same person.

"Well, then, I shall now travel backwards to the time when I was here with Sarah, my niece," resumed Uncle Joseph. "I must, if you please, speak the truth in this business, or, now that I am already backwards where I want to be, I shall stick fast in my place, and get on no more for the rest of my life. Sir and good madam, will you have the great kindness to forgive me and Sarah, my niece, if I confess that it was not to see the house that we came here, and rang at the bell, and gave deal of trouble, and wasted much breath of the big major-domo's with the scolding that we got. It was only to do one curious little thing, that we came together to this place — or, no, it was all about a secret of Sarah's, which is still as black and dark to me as the middle of the blackest and darkest night that ever was in the world — and, as I nothing knew about it, except that there was no harm in it to anybody or anything, and that Sarah was determined to go, and that I could not let her go by herself: as also for the good reason that she told me, she had the best right of anybody to take the letter and to hide it again, seeing that she was afraid of its being found if longer in that room she left it, which was the room where she had hidden it before — Why, so it happened, that I — no, that she — no, no, that I — Ach Gott!" cried Uncle Joseph, striking his forehead in despair, and relieving himself by an invocation in his own language. "I am lost in my own muddlement; and whereabouts the right place is, and how I am to get myself back into it, as I am a living sinner is more than I know!"

"There is not the least need to go back on our ac-

count," said Rosamond, forgetting all caution and self-restraint in her anxiety to restore the old man's confidence and composure. "Pray don't try to repeat your explanations. We know already —"

"We will suppose," said Leonard, interposing abruptly before his wife could add another word, "that we know already every-thing you can desire to tell us in relation to your niece's secret, and to your motives for desiring to see the house."

"You will suppose that!" exclaimed Uncle Joseph, looking greatly relieved. "Ah! I thank you, sir, and you good madam, a thousand times for helping me out of my own muddlement with a 'Suppose.' I am all over confusion from my tops to my toes; but I can go on now, I think, and lose myself no more. So! Let us say it in this way: I and Sarah, my niece, are *in* the house — that is the first 'Suppose.' I and Sarah, my niece, are *out* of the house — that is the second 'Suppose.' Good! now we go on once more. On my way back to my own home at Truro, I am frightened for Sarah, because of the faint she fell into on your stairs here, and because of a look in her face that it makes me heavy at my heart to see. Also, I am sorry for her sake, because she has not done that one curious little thing which she came into the house to do. I fret about these same matters, but I console myself too; and my comfort is that Sarah will stop with me in my house at Truro, and that I shall make her happy and well again, as soon as we are settled in our life together. Judge then, sir, what a blow falls on me, when I hear that she will not make her home where I make mine. Judge you, also, good madam, what my surprise must be, when I ask for her reason, and she tells me she must leave

Uncle Joseph because she is afraid of being found out by you." He stopped, and, looking anxiously at Rosamond's face, saw it sadden and turn away from him, after he had spoken his last words. "Are you sorry, Madam, for Sarah, my niece? do you pity her?" he asked with a little hesitation and trembling in his voice.

"I pity her with my whole heart," said Rosamond, warmly.

"And with my whole heart for that pity I thank you!" rejoined Uncle Joseph. "Ah madam, your kindness gives me the courage to go on, and to tell you that we parted from each other on the day of our getting back to Truro! When she came to see me this time, years and years, long and lonely, and very many, had passed, and we two had never met. I had the fear that many more would pass again, and I tried to make her stop with me to the very last. But she had still the same fear to drive her away — the fear of being found and put to the question by you. So, with the tears in her eyes (and in mine), and the grief at her heart (and at mine), she went away to hide herself in the empty bigness of the great city, London, which swallows up all people and all things that pour into it, and which has now swallowed up Sarah, my niece, with the rest. 'My child, you will write sometimes to Uncle Joseph?' I said, and she answered me, 'I will write often.' It is three weeks now since that time, and here, on my knee, are four letters she has written to me. I shall ask your leave to put them down open before you, because they will help me to get on farther yet with what I must say, and because I see in your face, madam, that you are indeed sorry for Sarah, my niece, from your heart."

He untied the packet of letters, opened them, kissed

them one by one, and put them down in a row on the table, smoothing them out carefully with his hand, and taking great pains to arrange them all in a perfectly straight line. A glance at the first of the little series showed Rosamond that the handwriting in it was the same as the handwriting in the body of the letter which had been found in the Myrtle Room.

"There is not much to read," said Uncle Joseph. "But if you will look through them first, madam, I can tell you after, all the reason for showing them that I have."

The old man was right. There was very little to read in the letters, and they grew progressively shorter as they became more recent in date. All four were written in the formal, conventionally correct style of a person taking up the pen with a fear of making mistakes in spelling and grammar, and were equally destitute of any personal particulars relative to the writer; all four anxiously entreated that Uncle Joseph would not be uneasy, inquired after his health, and expressed gratitude and love for him as warmly as their timid restraints of style would permit; all four contained these two questions relating to Rosamond: — First, had Mrs. Frankland arrived yet at Porthgenna Tower? Secondly, if she had arrived, what had Uncle Joseph heard about her? — And, finally, all four gave the same instructions for addressing an answer: — "Please direct to me, 'S. J., Post Office, Smith Street, London,'" — followed by the same apology, "Excuse my not giving my address, in case of accidents, for even in London, I am still afraid of being followed and found out. I send every morning for letters; so I am sure to get your answer."

"I told you, madam," said the old man, when Rosa-

mond raised her head from the letters, "that I was frightened and sorry for Sarah when she left me. Now see, if you please, why I get more frightened and more sorry yet, when I have all the four letters that she writes to me. They begin here, with the first, at my left hand; and they grow shorter, and shorter, and shorter, as they get nearer to my right, till the last is but eight little lines. Again, see, if you please. The writing of the first letter, here, at my left hand, is very fine — I mean it is very fine to me, because I love Sarah, and because I write very badly myself — but it is not so good in the second letter; it shakes a little, it crooks itself a little, in the last lines. In the third it is worse — more shake, more blot, more crook. In the fourth, where there is least to do, there is still more shake, still more blot, still more crook, than in all the other three put together. I see this; I remember that she was weak, and worn, and weary, when she left me, and I say to myself, She is ill, though she will not tell it, for the writing betrays her!"

Rosamond looked down again at the letters, and followed the significant changes for the worse in the handwriting, line by line, as the old man pointed them out.

"I say to myself that," he continued, "I wait, and think a little; and I hear my own heart whisper to me, Go you, Uncle Joseph, to London, and, while there is yet time, bring her back to be cured, and comforted and made happy in your own home! After that, I wait, and think a little again — not about leaving my business; I would leave it for ever sooner than Sarah should come to harm — but about what I am to do to get her to come back. That thought makes me look at the letters

again; the letters show me always the same questions about Mistress Frankland; I see it plainly as my own hand before me, that I shall never get Sarah, my niece, back, unless I can make easy her mind about those questions of Mistress Frankland's that she dreads as if there was death to her in every one of them. I see it! it makes my pipe go out; it drives me up from my chair; it puts my hat on my head; it brings me here, where I have once intruded myself already, and where I have no right, I know, to intrude myself again; it makes me beg and pray now, of your compassion for my niece, and of your goodness for me, that you will not deny me the means of bringing Sarah back. If I may only say to her, I have seen Mistress Frankland, and she has told me with her own lips that she will ask none of those questions that you fear so much — if I may only say that, Sarah will come back with me, and I shall thank you every day of my life for making me a happy man!"

The simple eloquence of the old man's words, the innocent earnestness of his manner, touched Rosamond to the heart. "I will do anything, I will promise anything," she answered eagerly, "to help you to bring her back! If she will only let me see her, I promise not to say one word that she would not wish me to say; I promise not to ask one question — no, not one — that it will pain her to answer. O, what comforting message can I send besides! what can I say!" — she stopped confusedly, feeling her husband's foot touching hers again.

"Ah, say no more! say no more!" cried Uncle Joseph, tying up his little packet of letters, with his eyes sparkling and his ruddy face all in a glow. "Enough said to

bring Sarah back! enough said to make me grateful for all my life! O, I am so happy, so happy, so happy, my skin is too small to hold me!" He tossed up the packet of letters into the air, caught it, kissed it, and put it back again in his pocket, all in an instant.

"You are not going?" said Rosamond. "Surely you are not going yet?"

"It is my loss to go away from here, which I must put up with, because it is also my gain to get sooner to Sarah," said Uncle Joseph. "For that reason only, I shall ask your pardon if I take my leave, with my heart full of thanks, and go my ways home again."

"When do you propose to start for London, Mr. Buschmann?" inquired Leonard.

"To-morrow, in the morning, early, sir," replied Uncle Joseph. "I shall finish the work that I must do to-night, and shall leave the rest to Samuel, my man, and shall then go to Sarah by the first coach."

"May I ask for your niece's address in London, in case we wish to write to you?"

"She gives me no address, sir, but the post-office; for even at the great distance of London, the same fear that she had all the way from this house, still sticks to her. But here is the place where I shall get my own bed," continued the old man, producing a small shop card. "It is the house of a countryman of my own, a fine baker of buns, sir, and a very good man indeed."

"Have you thought of any plan for finding out your niece's address?" inquired Rosamond, copying the direction on the card while she spoke.

"Ah, yes, — for I am always quick at making my plans," said Uncle Joseph. "I shall present myself to the master of the post, and to him I shall say just this and no more:

‘Good morning, sir. I am the man who writes the letters to S. J. She is my niece, if you please; and all that I want to know is, Where does she live?’ There is something like a plan, I think. A-ha!” He spread out both his hands interrogatively, and looked at Mrs. Frankland with a self-satisfied smile.

“I am afraid,” said Rosamond, partly amused, partly touched by his simplicity, “that the people at the post-office are not at all likely to be trusted with the address. I think you would do better to take a letter with you, directed to ‘S. J.,’ to deliver it in the morning when letters are received from the country; to wait near the door, and then to follow the person who is sent by your niece (as she tells you herself) to ask for letters for S. J.”

“You think that is better?” said Uncle Joseph, secretly convinced that his own idea was unquestionably the most ingenious of the two. “Good! The least little word that you say to me, madam, is a command that I follow with all my heart.” He took the crumpled felt hat out of his pocket, and advanced to say farewell, when Mr. Frankland spoke to him again.

“If you find your niece well, and willing to travel,” said Leonard, “you will bring her back to Truro at once? And you will let us know when you are both at home again?”

“At once, sir,” said Uncle Joseph. “To both these questions, I say at once.”

“If a week from this time passes,” continued Leonard, “and we hear nothing from you, we must conclude, then, either that some unforeseen obstacle stands in the way of your return, or that your fears on your niece’s account have been but too well founded, and that she is not able to travel?”

"Yes, sir; so let it be. But I hope you will hear from me before the week is out."

"O, so do I! most earnestly, most anxiously!" said Rosamond. "You remember my message?"

"I have got it here, every word of it," said Uncle Joseph, touching his heart. He raised the hand which Rosamond held out to him, to his lips. "I shall try to thank you better when I have come back," he said. "For all your kindness to me and to my niece, God bless you both, and keep you happy, till we meet again." With these words, he hastened to the door, waved his hand gaily with the old crumpled hat in it, and went out.

"Dear, simple, warm-hearted old man!" said Rosamond, as the door closed. "I wanted to tell him everything, Lenny. Why did you stop me?"

"My love, it is that very simplicity which you admire, and which I admire, too, that makes me cautious. At the first sound of his voice I felt as warmly towards him as you do; but the more I heard him talk, the more convinced I became that it would be rash to trust him, at first, for fear of his disclosing too abruptly to your mother that we know her secret. Our chance of winning her confidence and obtaining an interview with her, depends, I can see, upon our own tact in dealing with her exaggerated suspicions and her nervous fears. That good old man, with the best and kindest intentions in the world, might ruin everything. He will have done all that we can hope for, and all that we can wish, if he only succeeds in bringing her back to Truro."

"But if he fails — if anything happens — if she is really ill?"

"Let us wait till the week is over, Rosamond. It

will be time enough, then, to decide what we shall do next."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Waiting and Hoping.

THE week of expectation passed, and no tidings from Uncle Joseph reached Porthgenna Tower.

On the eighth day, Mr. Frankland sent a messenger to Truro, with orders to find out the cabinet-maker's shop kept by Mr. Buschmann, and to inquire of the person left in charge there whether he had received any news from his master. The messenger returned in the afternoon, and brought word that Mr. Buschmann had written one short note to his shopman since his departure, announcing that he had arrived safely towards nightfall in London; that he had met with a hospitable welcome from his countryman, the German baker; that he had discovered his niece's address by an accident which saved him all trouble in finding it out; and that he intended to go and see her at an early hour the next morning. Since the delivery of that note, no further communication had been received from him, and nothing therefore was known of the period at which he might be expected to return.

The one fragment of intelligence thus obtained was not of a nature to relieve the depression of spirits which the doubt and suspense of the past week had produced in Mrs. Frankland. Her husband endeavoured to combat the oppression of mind from which she was suffering, by reminding her that the ominous silence of Uncle Joseph might be just as probably occasioned by his niece's unwillingness as by her inability to return with him to

Truro. Taking into consideration her excessive sensitiveness and her unreasoning timidity, he declared it to be quite possible that Mrs. Frankland's message, instead of reassuring her, might only inspire her with fresh apprehensions, and might consequently strengthen her resolution to keep herself out of reach of all communications from Porthgenna Tower. Rosamond listened patiently while this view of the case was placed before her, and acknowledged that the reasonableness of it was beyond dispute; but her readiness in admitting that her husband might be right and that she might be wrong, was accompanied by no change for the better in the condition of her spirits. The interpretation which the old man had placed upon the alteration for the worse in Mrs. Jazeph's handwriting, had produced a vivid impression on her mind, which had been strengthened by her own recollection of her mother's pale, worn face, when they met as strangers at West Winston. Reason, therefore, as convincingly as he might, Mr. Frankland was unable to shake his wife's conviction that Uncle Joseph's silence was caused solely by the illness of his niece.

The return of the messenger from Truro suspended any further discussion on this topic by leading Mr. and Mrs. Frankland to occupy themselves in considering a question of much greater importance. After having waited one day beyond the week that had been appointed, what was the proper course of action for them now to adopt, in the absence of any information from London or from Truro to decide their future proceedings?

Leonard's first idea was to write immediately to Uncle Joseph, at the address which he had given on the occasion of his visit to Porthgenna Tower. When this project was communicated to Rosamond, she opposed it

on the ground that the necessary delay before the answer to the letter could arrive would involve a serious waste of time, when it might, for aught they knew to the contrary, be of the last importance to them not to risk the loss of a single day. If illness prevented Mrs. Jazeph from travelling, it would be necessary to see her at once, because that illness might increase. If she were only suspicious of their motives, it was equally important to open personal communications with her before she could find an opportunity of concealing herself again in some place of refuge which Uncle Joseph himself might not be able to trace.

The truth of these conclusions was obvious, but Leonard hesitated to adopt them, because they involved the necessity of a journey to London. If he went there without his wife, his blindness placed him at the mercy of strangers and servants, in conducting investigations of the most delicate and most private nature. If Rosamond accompanied him, it would be necessary to risk all kinds of delays and inconveniences by taking the child with them on a long and wearisome journey of more than two hundred and fifty miles.

Rosamond met both these difficulties with her usual directness and decision. The idea of her husband travelling anywhere under any circumstances, in his helpless dependent state, without having her to attend on him, she dismissed at once as too preposterous for consideration. The second objection of subjecting the child to the chances and fatigues of a long journey, she met by proposing that they should travel to Exeter at their own time and in their own conveyance, and that they should afterwards insure plenty of comfort and plenty of room by taking a carriage to themselves, when they reached

the railroad at Exeter. After thus smoothing away the difficulties which seemed to set themselves in opposition to the journey, she again reverted to the absolute necessity of undertaking it. She reminded Leonard of the serious interest that they both had in immediately obtaining Mrs. Jazeph's testimony to the genuineness of the letter which had been found in the Myrtle Room, as well as in ascertaining all the details of the extraordinary fraud which had been practised by Mrs. Treverton on her husband. She pleaded also her own natural anxiety to make all the atonement in her power for the pain she must have unconsciously inflicted, in the bedroom at West Winston, on the person of all others whose failings and sorrows she was most bound to respect: and, having thus stated the motives which urged her husband and herself to lose no time in communicating personally with Mrs. Jazeph, she again drew the inevitable conclusion, that there was no alternative, in the position in which they were now placed, but to start forthwith on the journey to London.

A little further consideration satisfied Leonard, that the emergency was of such a nature as to render all attempts to meet it by half measures impossible. He felt that his own convictions agreed with his wife's; and he resolved accordingly to act at once, without further indecision or further delay. Before the evening was over, the servants at Porthgenna were amazed by receiving directions to pack the trunks for travelling, and to order horses at the post-town for an early hour the next morning.

On the first day of the journey, the travellers started as soon as the carriage was ready, rested on the road towards noon, and remained for the night at Liskeard.

On the second day, they arrived at Exeter, and slept there. On the third day, they reached London, by the railway, between six and seven o'clock in the evening.

When they were comfortably settled for the night at their hotel, and when an hour's rest and quiet had enabled them to recover a little after the fatigues of the journey, Rosamond wrote two notes under her husband's direction. The first was addressed to Mr. Buschmann: it simply informed him of their arrival, and of their earnest desire to see him at the hotel as early as possible the next morning; and it concluded by cautioning him to wait until he had seen them, before he announced their presence in London to his niece.

The second note was addressed to the family solicitor, Mr. Nixon, — the same gentleman who, more than a year since, had written, at Mrs. Frankland's request, the letter which informed Andrew Treverton of his brother's decease, and of the circumstances under which the captain had died. All that Rosamond now wrote, in her husband's name and her own, to ask of Mr. Nixon, was that he would endeavour to call at their hotel on his way to business the next morning, to give his opinion on a private matter of great importance, which had obliged them to undertake the journey from Porthgenna to London. This note, and the note to Uncle Joseph, were sent to their respective addresses by a messenger, on the evening when they were written.

The first visitor who arrived the next morning was the solicitor, — a clear-headed, fluent, polite old gentleman, who had known Captain Treverton and his father before him. He came to the hotel fully expecting to be consulted on some difficulties connected with the

Porthgenna estate, which the local agent was perhaps unable to settle, and which might be of too confused and intricate a nature to be easily expressed in writing. When he heard what the emergency really was, and when the letter that had been found in the Myrtle Room, was placed in his hands, it is not too much to say that for the first time in the course of a long life and a varied practice among all sorts and conditions of clients, sheer astonishment utterly paralysed Mr. Nixon's faculties, and bereft him, for some moments, of the power of uttering a single word.

When, however, Mr. Frankland proceeded from making the disclosure to announcing his resolution to give up the purchase-money of Porthgenna Tower, if the genuineness of the letter could be proved to his own satisfaction, the old lawyer recovered the use of his tongue immediately, and protested against his client's intention with the sincere warmth of a man who thoroughly understood the advantage of being rich, and who knew what it was to gain and to lose a fortune of forty thousand pounds. Leonard listened with patient attention, while Mr. Nixon argued from his professional point of view, against regarding the letter, taken by itself, as a genuine document, and against accepting Mrs. Jazeph's evidence, taken with it, as decisive on the subject of Mrs. Frankland's real parentage. He expatiated on the improbability of Mrs. Treverton's alleged fraud upon her husband having been committed, without other persons, besides her maid and herself, being in the secret. He declared it to be in accordance with all received experience of human nature, that one or more of those other persons must have spoken of the secret either from malice or from want of caution, and that the consequent exposure of

the truth must, in the course of so long a period as twenty-two years, have come to the knowledge of some among the many people in the West of England as well as in London, who knew the Treverton family personally or by reputation. From this objection he passed to another which admitted the possible genuineness of the letter, as a written document, but which pleaded the probability of its having been produced under the influence of some mental delusion on Mrs. Treverton's part, which her maid might have had an interest in humouring at the time, though she might have hesitated, after her mistress's death, at risking the possible consequences of attempting to profit by the imposture. Having stated this theory, as one which not only explained the writing of the letter but the hiding of it also, Mr. Nixon further observed in reference to Mrs. Jazeph, that any evidence she might give was of little or no value in a legal point of view, from the difficulty — or, he might say, the impossibility — of satisfactorily identifying the infant mentioned in the letter, with the lady whom he had now the honour of addressing as Mrs. Frankland, and whom no unsubstantiated document in existence should induce him to believe to be any other than the daughter of his old friend and client, Captain Treverton.

Having heard the lawyer's objections to the end, Leonard admitted their ingenuity, but acknowledged, at the same time, that they had produced no alteration in his impressions on the subject of the letter, or in his convictions as to the course of duty which he felt bound to follow. He would wait, he said, for Mrs. Jazeph's testimony before he acted decisively; but if that testimony were of such a nature, and were given in such a manner, as to satisfy him that his wife had no moral right to

the fortune that she possessed, he would restore it at once to the person who had — Mr. Andrew Treverton.

Finding that no fresh arguments or suggestions could shake Mr. Frankland's resolution, and that no separate appeal to Rosamond had the slightest effect in stimulating her to use her influence for the purpose of inducing her husband to alter his determination; and feeling convinced, moreover, from all that he heard, that Mr. Frankland would, if he was opposed by many more objections, either employ another professional adviser, or risk committing some fatal legal error by acting for himself in the matter of restoring the money; Mr. Nixon at last consented, under protest, to give his client what help he needed in case it became necessary to hold communication with Andrew Treverton. He listened with polite resignation to Leonard's brief statement of the questions that he intended to put to Mrs. Jazeph; and said, with the slightest possible dash of sarcasm, when it came to his turn to speak, that they were excellent questions in a moral point of view, and would doubtless produce answers which would be full of interest of the most romantic kind. "But," he added, "as you have one child already, Mr. Frankland, and as you may, perhaps, if I may venture on suggesting such a thing, have more in the course of years; and as those children, when they grow up, may hear of the loss of their mother's fortune, and may wish to know why it was sacrificed, I should recommend — resting the matter on family grounds alone, and not going further to make a legal point of it also — that you procure from Mrs. Jazeph, besides the *vivâ voce* evidence you propose to extract (against the admissibility of which, in this case, I again protest),

a written declaration, which you may leave behind you at your death, and which may justify you in the eyes of your children in case the necessity for such justification should arise at some future period."

This advice was too plainly valuable to be neglected. At Leonard's request, Mr. Nixon drew out at once a form of declaration, affirming the genuineness of the letter addressed by the late Mrs. Treverton, on her death-bed, to her husband, since also deceased, and bearing witness to the truth of the statements therein contained, both as regarded the fraud practised on Captain Treverton and the asserted parentage of the child. Telling Mr. Frankland that he would do well to have Mrs. Jazeph's signature to this document attested by the names of two competent witnesses, Mr. Nixon handed the declaration to Rosamond to read aloud to her husband, and, finding that no objection was made to any part of it, and that he could be of no further use in the present early stage of the proceedings, rose to take his leave. Leonard engaged to communicate with him again, in the course of the day, if necessary; and he retired, reiterating his protest to the last, and declaring that he had never met with such an extraordinary case and such a self-willed client before in the whole course of his practice.

Nearly an hour elapsed after the departure of the lawyer before any second visitor was announced. At the expiration of that time, the welcome sound of footsteps was heard approaching the door, and Uncle Joseph entered the room.

Rosamond's observation, stimulated by anxiety, detected a change in his look and manner, the moment he appeared. His face was harassed and fatigued, and his gait, as he advanced into the room, had lost the

briskness and activity which so quaintly distinguished it, when she saw him, for the first time, at Porthgenna Tower. He tried to add to his first words of greeting an apology for being late; but Rosamond interrupted him, in her eagerness to ask the first important question.

"We know that you have discovered her address," she said, anxiously, „but we know nothing more. Is she as you feared to find her? Is she ill?"

The old man shook his head sadly. "When I showed you her letter," he said, "what did I tell you? She is so ill, madam, that not even the message your kindness gave to me will do her any good."

Those few simple words struck Rosamond's heart with a strange fear, which silenced her against her own will, when she tried to speak again. Uncle Joseph understood the anxious look she fixed on him, and the quick sign she made towards the chair standing nearest to the sofa on which she and her husband were sitting. There he took his place, and there he confided to them all that he had to tell.

His first question, he said, when he reached the shop of his countryman, the German baker, related to the locality of the postoffice to which his niece's letters were addressed; and the answer informed him that it was situated within ten minutes' walk of his friend's house. The conversation that ensued on the subject of his errand in London, and of his hopes and fears in undertaking it, led to more questions and answers, which terminated in the discovery that the baker, among his other customers, supplied the landlady of a lodging house in the neighbourhood with certain light biscuits for which his shop was famous. The biscuits were purchased for the use of an invalid lady who was staying in the house; and the

landlady, on one of the many occasions when she came to the shop and gossiped about her own affairs, expressed her surprise that a person so evidently respectable and so punctual in all her payments as the sick lodger, should be lying ill without a friend to come and see her, and should be living under the name of "Mrs. James," when the name marked on her linen was "S. Jazeph." Upon arriving at this extraordinary result of a conversation which had started from the simplest possible beginning, the old man had taken down the address of the lodging-house immediately, and had gone there at an early hour the next morning.

He had been saddened, over-night, by the confirmation of his fears on his niece's account, and he was startled, when he saw her in the morning, by the violent nervous agitation which she manifested as he approached her bedside. But he had not lost heart and hope, until he had communicated Mrs. Frankland's message, and had found that it failed altogether in producing the re-assuring effect on her spirits which he had trusted and believed that it would exercise. Instead of soothing, it seemed to excite and alarm her afresh. Among a host of minute inquiries about Mrs. Frankland's looks, about her manner towards him, about the exact words she had spoken, all of which he was able to answer more or less to her satisfaction, she had addressed two questions to him, to which he was utterly unable to reply. The first of the questions was, Whether Mrs. Frankland had said anything about the Secret? The second was, Whether she had spoken any chance word to lead to the suspicion that she had found out the situation of the Myrtle Room?

The doctor in attendance had come in, the old man

added, while he was still sitting by his niece's bedside, and still trying ineffectually to induce her to accept the friendly and re-assuring language of Mrs. Frankland's message, as sufficient answer to the questions which he was unable to meet by any more direct and more convincing form of reply. After making some inquiries and talking a little while on indifferent matters, the doctor had privately taken him aside; had informed him that the pain over the region of the heart, and the difficulty in breathing, which were the symptoms of which his niece complained, were more serious in their nature than persons uninstructed in medical matters might be disposed to think; and had begged him to give her no more messages from any one, unless he felt perfectly sure beforehand that they would have the effect of clearing her mind, at once and for ever, from the secret anxieties that now harassed it — anxieties which he might rest assured were aggravating her malady day by day, and rendering all the medical help that could be given of little or no avail.

Upon this, after sitting longer with his niece and after holding counsel with himself, he had resolved to write privately to Mrs. Frankland that evening, after getting back to his friend's house. The letter had taken him longer to compose than anyone accustomed to writing would believe. At last, after delays in making a fair copy from many rough drafts, and delays in leaving his task to attend on his niece, he had completed a letter narrating what had happened since his arrival in London, in language which he hoped might be understood. Judging by comparison of dates, this letter must have crossed Mr. and Mrs. Frankland on the road. It contained nothing more than he had just been relating with

his own lips — except that it also communicated, as a proof that distance had not diminished the fear which tormented his niece's mind, the explanation she had given to him of her concealment of her name, and of her choice of an abode among strangers, when she had friends in London to whom she might have gone. That explanation it was perhaps needless to have lengthened the letter by repeating, for it only involved his saying over again, in substance, what he had already said in speaking of the motive which had forced Sarah to part from him at Truro.

With last words such as those, the sad and simple story of the old man came to an end. After waiting a little to recover her selfpossession and to steady her voice, Rosamond touched her husband to draw his attention to herself, and whispered to him —

“I may say all, now, that I wished to say at Porthgenna?”

“All,” he answered. “If you can trust yourself, Rosamond, it is fittest that he should hear it from your lips.”

After the first natural burst of astonishment was over, the effect of the disclosure of the Secret on Uncle Joseph exhibited the most striking contrast that can be imagined to the effect of it on Mr. Nixon. No shadow of doubt darkened the old man's face, not a word of objection dropped from his lips. The one emotion excited in him was simple, unreflecting, unalloyed delight. He sprang to his feet with all his natural activity, his eyes sparkled again with all their natural brightness: one moment, he clapped his hands like a child; the next, he caught up his hat, and entreated Rosamond to let him lead her at once to his niece's bedside. “If you

will only tell Sarah what you have just told me," he cried, hurrying across the room to open the door, "you will give her back her courage, you will raise her up from her bed, you will cure her before the day is out!"

A warning word from Mr. Frankland stopped him on a sudden, and brought him back, silent and attentive, to the chair that he had left the moment before.

"Think a little of what the doctor told you," said Leonard. "The sudden surprise which has made you so happy might do fatal mischief to your niece. Before we take the responsibility of speaking to her on a subject which is sure to agitate her violently, however careful we may be in introducing it, we ought first, I think, for safety's sake, to apply to the doctor for advice."

Rosamond warmly seconded her husband's suggestion, and, with her characteristic impatience of delay, proposed that they should find out the medical man immediately. Uncle Joseph announced — a little unwillingly, as it seemed — in answer to her inquiries, that he knew the place of the doctor's residence, and that he was generally to be found at home before one o'clock in the afternoon. It was then just half-past twelve; and Rosamond, with her husband's approval, rang the bell at once to send for a cab. She was about to leave the room to put on her bonnet, after giving the necessary order, when the old man stopped her by asking, with some appearance of hesitation and confusion, if it was considered necessary that he should go to the doctor with Mr. and Mrs. Frankland; adding, before the question could be answered, that he would greatly prefer, if there was no objection to it on their parts, being left to wait at the hotel to receive any instructions they might wish to give him on their return. Leonard immediately complied with his

request, without inquiring into his reasons for making it; but Rosamond's curiosity was aroused, and she asked why he preferred remaining by himself at the hotel to going with them to the doctor.

"I like him not," said the old man. "When he speaks about Sarah, he looks and talks as if he thought she would never get up from her bed again." Answering in those brief words, he walked away uneasily to the window, as if he desired to say no more.

The residence of the doctor was at some little distance, but Mr. and Mrs. Frankland arrived there before one o'clock, and found him at home. He was a young man, with a mild, grave face, and a quiet subdued manner. Daily contact with suffering and sorrow had perhaps prematurely steadied and saddened his character. Merely introducing her husband and herself to him, as persons who were deeply interested in his patient at the lodging-house, Rosamond left it to Leonard to ask the first questions relating to the condition of her mother's health.

The doctor's answer was ominously prefaced by a few polite words which were evidently intended to prepare his hearers for a less hopeful report than they might have come there expecting to receive. Carefully divesting the subject of all professional technicalities, he told them that his patient was undoubtedly affected with serious disease of the heart. The exact nature of this disease he candidly acknowledged to be a matter of doubt, which various medical men might decide in various ways. According to the opinion which he had himself formed from the symptoms, he believed that the patient's malady was connected with the artery which conveys blood directly from the heart through the system. Having found her singularly unwilling to answer questions relating to

the nature of her past life, he could only guess that the disease was of long standing; that it was originally produced by some great mental shock, followed by long wearing anxiety (of which her face showed palpable traces); and that it had been seriously aggravated by the fatigue of a journey to London, which she acknowledged she had undertaken, at a time when great nervous exhaustion rendered her totally unfit to travel. Speaking according to this view of the case, it was his painful duty to tell her friends that any violent emotion would unquestionably put her life in danger. At the same time, if the mental uneasiness from which she was now suffering could be removed, and if she could be placed in a quiet comfortable country home, among people who would be unremittingly careful in keeping her composed, and in suffering her to want for nothing, there was reason to hope that the progress of the disease might be arrested, and that her life might be spared for some years to come.

Rosamond's heart bounded at the picture of the future, which her fancy drew from the suggestions that lay hidden in the doctor's last words. "She can command every advantage you have mentioned, and more, if more is required!" she interposed eagerly, before her husband could speak again. "Oh, sir, if rest among kind friends is all that her poor weary heart wants, thank God we can give it!"

"We can give it," said Leonard, continuing the sentence for his wife, "if the doctor will sanction our making a communication to his patient, which is of a nature to relieve her of all anxiety, but which, it is necessary to add, she is at present quite unprepared to receive."

"May I ask," said the doctor, "who is to be entrusted

with the responsibility of making the communication you mention?"

"There are two persons who could be entrusted with it," answered Leonard. "One is the old man whom you have seen by your patient's bedside. The other is my wife."

"In that case," rejoined the doctor, looking at Rosamond, "there can be no doubt that this lady is the fittest person to undertake the duty." He paused, and reflected for a moment; then added: — "May I inquire, however, before I venture on guiding your decision, one way or the other, whether the lady is as familiarly known to my patient, and is on the same intimate terms with her, as the old man?"

"I am afraid I must answer No to both those questions," replied Leonard. "And I ought, perhaps, to tell you, at the same time, that your patient believes my wife to be now in Cornwall. Her first appearance in the sick room would, I fear, cause great surprise to the sufferer, and possibly some little alarm as well."

"Under those circumstances," said the doctor, "the risk of trusting the old man, simple as he is, seems to be infinitely the least risk of the two — for the plain reason that his presence can cause her no surprise. However unskilfully he may break the news, he will have the great advantage over this lady of not appearing unexpectedly at the bedside. If the hazardous experiment must be tried, — and I assume that it must, from what you have said, — you have no choice, I think, but to trust it, with proper cautions and instructions, to the old man to carry out."

After arriving at that conclusion, there was no more to be said on either side. The interview terminated, and

Rosamond and her husband hastened back to give Uncle Joseph his instructions at the hotel.

As they approached the door of their sitting-room they were surprised by hearing the sound of music inside. On entering, they found the old man crouched up on a stool, listening to a shabby little musical box which was placed on a table close by him, and which was playing an air that Rosamond recognised immediately as the "Batti, batti" of Mozart.

"I hope you will pardon me for making music to keep myself company while you were away," said Uncle Joseph, starting up in some little confusion, and touching the stop of the box. "This is, if you please, of all my friends and companions the oldest that is left. The divine Mozart, the king of all the composers that ever lived, gave it with his own hand, madam, to my brother, when Max was a boy in the music-school at Vienna. Since my niece left me in Cornwall, I have not had the heart to make Mozart sing to me out of this little bit of box until to-day. Now that you have made me happy about Sarah again, my ears ache once more for the tiny *ting-ting* that has always the same friendly sound to my heart, travel where I may. But enough so," said the old man, placing the box in the leather case by his side which Rosamond had noticed there when she first saw him at Porthgenna. "I shall put back my singing-bird into his cage, and shall ask, when that is done, if you will be pleased to tell me what it is that the doctor has said?"

Rosamond answered his request by relating the substance of the conversation which had passed between her husband and the doctor. She then, with many preparatory cautions, proceeded to instruct the old man how to

disclose the discovery of the Secret to his niece. She told him that the circumstances in connection with it must be first stated, not as events that had really happened, but as events that might be supposed to have happened. She put the words that he would have to speak, into his mouth, choosing the fewest and the plainest that would answer the purpose; she showed him how he might glide almost imperceptibly from referring to the discovery as a thing that might be supposed, to referring to it as a thing that had really happened; and she impressed upon him, as most important of all, to keep perpetually before his niece's mind the fact that the discovery of the Secret had not awakened one bitter feeling or one resentful thought, towards her, in the minds of either of the persons who had been so deeply interested in finding it out.

Uncle Joseph listened with unwavering attention until Rosamond had done; then rose from his seat, fixed his eyes intently on her face, and detected an expression of anxiety and doubt in it which he rightly interpreted as referring to himself.

"May I make you sure, before I go away, that I shall forget nothing?" he asked, very earnestly. "I have no head to invent, it is true; but I have something in me that can remember, and the more especially when it is for Sarah's sake. If you please, listen now, and hear if I can say to you over again all that you have said to me?"

Standing before Rosamond, with something in his look and manner strangely and touchingly suggestive of the long past days of his childhood, and of the time when he had said his earliest lessons at his mother's knee, he now repeated, from first to last, the instructions

that had been given to him, with a verbal exactness, with an easy readiness of memory, which, in a man of his age, was nothing less than astonishing. "Have I kept it all as I should?" he asked simply, when he had come to an end. "And may I go my ways now, and take my good news to Sarah's bedside?"

It was still necessary to detain him, while Rosamond and her husband consulted together on the best and safest means of following up the avowal that the Secret was discovered by the announcement of their own presence in London. After some consideration, Leonard asked his wife to produce the document which the lawyer had drawn out that morning, and to write a few lines, from his dictation, on the blank side of the paper, requesting Mrs. Jazeph to read the form of declaration, and to affix her signature to it, if she felt that it required her, in every particular, to affirm nothing that was not the exact truth. When this had been done, and when the leaf on which Mrs. Frankland had written had been folded outwards, so that it might be the first page to catch the eye, Leonard directed that the paper should be given to the old man, and explained to him what he was to do with it, in these words:

"When you have broken the news about the Secret to your niece," he said, "and when you have allowed her full time to compose herself, if she asks questions about my wife and myself (as I believe she will) hand that paper to her for answer, and beg her to read it. Whether she is willing to sign it, or not, she is sure to inquire how you came by it. Tell her in return that you have received it from Mrs. Frankland — using the word 'received,' so that she may believe at first that it was sent to you from Porthgenna by the post. If you

find that she signs the declaration, and that she is not much agitated after doing so, then tell her in the same gradual way in which you tell the truth about the discovery of the Secret, that my wife gave the paper to you with her own hands, and that she is now in London —”

“Waiting and longing to see her,” added Rosamond. “You, who forget nothing, will not, I am sure, forget to say that?”

The little compliment to his powers of memory made Uncle Joseph colour with pleasure, as if he was a boy again. Promising to prove worthy of the trust reposed in him, and engaging to come back and relieve Mrs. Frankland of all suspense before the day was out, he took his leave, and went forth hopefully on his momentous errand.

Rosamond watched him from the window, threading his way in and out among the throng of passengers on the pavement, until he was lost to view. How nimbly the tight little figure sped away out of sight! How gaily the unclouded sunlight poured down on the cheerful bustle in the street! The whole being of the great city basked in the summer glory of the day; all its mighty pulses beat high; and all its myriad voices whispered of hope!

CHAPTER XXV.

The Story of the Past.

THE afternoon wore away, and the evening came, and still there were no signs of Uncle Joseph's return. Towards seven o'clock, Rosamond was summoned by the nurse, who reported that the child was awake and fretful. After soothing and quieting him, she took him

back with her to the sitting-room; having first, with her usual consideration for the comfort of any servant whom she employed, sent the nurse down-stairs, with a leisure hour at her own disposal, after the duties of the day. "I don't like to be away from you, Lenny, at this anxious time," she said, when she rejoined her husband; "so I have brought the child in here. He is not likely to be troublesome again; and the having him to take care of is really a relief to me in our present state of suspense."

The clock on the mantel-piece chimed the half-hour past seven. The carriages in the street were following one another more and more rapidly, filled with people in full dress, on their way to dinner, or on their way to the opera. The hawkers were shouting proclamations of news in the neighbouring square, with the second editions of the evening papers under their arms. People who had been serving behind the counter all day were standing at the shop doors to get a breath of fresh air. Working men were trooping homeward, now singly, now together in weary, shambling groups. Idlers, who had come out after dinner, were lighting cigars at corners of streets, and looking about them, uncertain which way they should turn their steps next. It was just that transitional period of the evening at which the street-life of the day is almost over, and the street-life of the night has not quite begun — just the time, also, at which Rosamond, after vainly trying to find relief from the weariness of waiting by looking out of window, was becoming more and more deeply absorbed in her own anxious thoughts, when her attention was abruptly recalled to events in the little world about her by the opening of the room door. She looked up immediately

from the child lying asleep on her lap, and saw that Uncle Joseph had returned at last.

The old man came in silently, with the form of declaration which he had taken away with him by Mr. Frankland's desire, open in his hand. As he approached nearer to the window, Rosamond noticed that his face looked as if it had grown strangely older during the few hours of his absence. He came close up to her, and still not saying a word, laid his trembling forefinger low down on the open paper, and held it before her so that she could look at the place thus indicated without rising from her chair.

His silence and the change in his face struck her with a sudden dread which made her hesitate before she spoke to him. "Have you told her all?" she asked, after a moment's delay, putting the question in low, whispering tones, and not heeding the paper.

"This answers that I have," he said, still pointing to the declaration. "See! here is the name, signed in the place that was left for it — signed by her own hand."

Rosamond glanced at the paper. There indeed was the signature, "S. Jazeph;" and underneath it were added, in faintly traced lines of parenthesis, these explanatory words: "Formerly, Sarah Leeson."

"Why don't you speak?" exclaimed Rosamond, looking at him in growing alarm. "Why don't you tell us how she bore it?"

"Ah! don't ask me, don't ask me!" he answered, shrinking back from her hand, as she tried in her eagerness to lay it on his arm. "I forgot nothing. I said the words as you taught me to say them. I went the roundabout way to the truth with my tongue; but my face took the short cut, and got to the end first.

Pray, of your goodness to me, ask nothing about it! Be satisfied, if you please, with knowing that she is better, and quieter, and happier now. The bad is over and past, and the good is all to come. If I tell you how she looked, if I tell you what she said, if I tell you all that happened when first she knew the truth, the fright will catch me round the heart again, and all the sobbing and crying that I have swallowed down will rise once more and choke me. I must keep my head clear, and my eyes dry — or, how shall I say to you all the things that I have promised Sarah, as I love my own soul and hers, to tell, before I lay myself down to rest to-night?" He stopped, took out a coarse little cotton pocket handkerchief, with a flaring white pattern on a dull blue ground, and dried a few tears that had risen in his eyes while he was speaking. "My life has had so much happiness in it," he said, self-reproachfully, looking at Rosamond, "that my courage, when it is wanted for the time of trouble, is not easy to find. And yet, I am German! all my nation are philosophers — why is it that I alone am as soft in my brains, and as weak in my heart, as the pretty little baby, there, that is lying asleep in your lap?"

"Don't speak again; don't tell us anything till you feel more composed," said Rosamond. "We are relieved from our worst suspense now that we know you have left her quieter and better. I will ask no more questions, — at least," she added, after a pause, "I will only ask one." — She stopped; and her eyes wandered inquiringly towards Leonard. He had hitherto been listening with silent interest to all that had passed; but he now interposed gently, and advised his wife to wait a little before she ventured on saying anything more.

"It is such an easy question to answer," pleaded Rosamond. "I only wanted to hear whether she has got my message — whether she knows that I am waiting and longing to see her, if she will but let me come?"

"Yes, yes," said the old man, nodding, to Rosamond with an air of relief. "That question is easy; easier even than you think, for it brings me straight to the beginning of all that I have got to say." He had been hitherto walking restlessly about the room; sitting down one moment, and getting up the next. He now placed a chair for himself, midway between Rosamond — who was sitting, with the child, near the window — and her husband, who occupied the sofa at the lower end of the room. In this position, which enabled him to address himself alternately to Mr. and Mrs. Frankland without difficulty, he soon recovered composure enough to open his heart unreservedly to the interest of his subject.

"When the worst was over and past," he said, addressing Rosamond — "when she could listen and when I could speak, the first words of comfort that I said to her were the words of your message. Straight she looked at me, with doubting, fearing eyes. 'Was her husband there to hear her?' she says. 'Did he look angry? did he look sorry? did he change ever so little, when you got that message from her?' And I said, 'No: no change, no anger, no sorrow, nothing like it.' And she said again, 'Has it made between them no misery? has it nothing wrenched away of all the love and all the happiness that binds them the one to the other?' And once more I answer to that, 'No! no misery, no wrench. See now! I shall go my ways at once to the good wife, and fetch her here to answer for the good husband with her own tongue.' While I speak

those words there flies out over 'all her face a look — no, not a look — a light, like a sunflash. While I can count one, it lasts; before I can count two, it is gone; the face is all dark again; it is turned away from me on the pillow, and I see the hand that is outside the bed begin to crumple up the sheet. 'I shall go my ways, then, and fetch the good wife,' I say again. And she says, 'No! not yet. I must not see her, I dare not see her till she knows —' and there she stops, and the hand crumples up the sheet again, and softly, softly, I say to her, 'Knows what?' and she answers me, 'What I, her mother, cannot tell her to her face, for shame.' And I say, 'So, so, my child! tell it not, then — tell it not at all.' She shakes her head at me, and wrings her two hands together, like this, on the bed-cover. 'I *must* tell it,' she says. 'I must rid my heart of all that has been gnawing, gnawing, gnawing at it, or how shall I feel the blessing that the seeing her will bring to me, if my conscience is only clear?' Then she stops a little, and lifts up her two hands, so, and cries out loud, 'Oh, will God's mercy show me no way of telling it that will spare me before my child!' And I say, 'Hush, then! there is a way. Tell it to Uncle Joseph, who is the same as father to you! Tell it to Uncle Joseph, whose little son died in your arms, whose tears your hand wiped away, in the grief-time long ago! Tell it, my child, to *me*: and I shall take the risk, and the shame (if there is shame) of telling it again. I, with nothing to speak for me but my white hair; I, with nothing to help me but my heart that means no harm — I shall go to that good and true woman, with the burden of her mother's grief to lay before her; and, in my soul of souls I believe it, she will not turn away!'"

He paused, and looked at Rosamond. Her head was bent down over her child; her tears were dropping slowly, one by one, on the bosom of his little white dress. Waiting a moment to collect herself before she spoke, she held out her hand to the old man, and firmly and gratefully met the look he fixed on her. "O, go on, go on!" she said. "Let me prove to you that your generous confidence in me is not misplaced!"

"I knew it was not, from the first, as surely as I know it now!" said Uncle Joseph. "And Sarah, when I had spoken to her, she knew it too. She was silent for a little; she cried for a little; she leant over from the pillow and kissed me here, on my cheek, as I sat by the bedside; and then she looked back, back, back, in her mind, to the Long Ago, and very quietly, very slowly, with her eyes looking into my eyes, and her hand resting so in mine, she spoke the words to me that I must now speak again to you, who sit here to-day as her judge, before you go to her to-morrow, as her child."

"Not as her judge!" said Rosamond. "I cannot, I must not hear you say that."

"I speak her words, not mine," rejoined the old man gravely. "Wait, before you bid me change them for others — wait, till you know the end."

He drew his chair a little nearer to Rosamond, paused for a minute or two, to arrange his recollections, and to separate them one from the other; then resumed:

"As Sarah began with me," he said, "so I, for my part, must begin also, — which means to say, that I go down now through the years that are past, to the time when my niece went out to her first service. You know that the sea-captain, the brave and good man Treverton, took for his wife an artist on the stage — what they

call, play-actress, here? A grand big woman, and a handsome; with a life, and a spirit, and a will in her, that is not often seen: a woman of the sort who can say, We will do this thing, or that thing — and do it in the spite and face of all the scruples, all the obstacles, all the oppositions in the world. To this lady there comes for maid to wait upon her, Sarah, my niece, — a young girl, then, pretty, and kind, and gentle, and very, very shy. Out of many others who want the place, and who are bolder and bigger and quicker girls, Mistress Treverton, nevertheless, picks Sarah. This is strange, but it is stranger yet, that Sarah, on her part, when she comes out of her first fears, and doubts, and pains of shyness about herself, gets to be fond with all her heart of that grand and handsome mistress, who has a life, and a spirit, and a will of the sort that is not often seen. This is strange to say, but it is also, as I know from Sarah's own lips, every word of it true."

"True beyond a doubt," said Leonard. "Most of the strong attachments in the world are formed between people who are unlike each other."

"So the life they led in that ancient house of Porthgenna began happily for them all," continued the old man. "The love that the mistress had for her husband was so full in her heart, that it overflowed in kindness to everybody who was about her, and to Sarah, her maid, before all the rest. She would have nobody but Sarah to read to her, to work for her, to dress her in the morning and the evening, and to undress her at night. She was as familiar as a sister might have been with Sarah, when they two were alone, in the long days of rain. It was the game of her idle time — the laugh that she liked most — to astonish the poor country

maid, who had never so much as seen what a theatre's inside was like, by dressing in fine clothes, and painting her face, and speaking and doing all that she had done on the theatre-scene, in the days that were before her marriage. The more she startled and puzzled Sarah with these jokes and pranks of masquerade, the better she was always pleased. For a year this easy, happy life went on in the ancient house, — happy for all the servants, — happier still for the master and mistress, but for the want of one thing to make the whole complete, one little blessing, that was always hoped for, and that never came — the same, if you please, as the blessing in the long white frock, with the plump delicate face and the tiny arms, that I see before me now."

He paused, to point the allusion by nodding and smiling at the child in Rosamond's lap; then resumed.

"As the new year gets on," he said, "Sarah sees in the mistress a change. The good sea-captain is a man who loves children, and is fond of getting to the house all the little boys and girls of his friends round about. He plays with them, he kisses them, he makes them presents — he is the best friend the little boys and girls have ever had. The mistress, who should be their best friend too, looks on and says nothing; looks on, red sometimes, and sometimes pale; goes away into her room where Sarah is at work for her, and walks about, and finds fault; and one day lets the evil temper fly out of her at her tongue, and says 'Why have I got no child for my husband to be fond of? Why must he kiss and play always with the children of other women? They take his love away for something that is not mine. I hate those children and their mothers too!' It is her passion that speaks then, but it speaks what is near the

truth for all that. She will not make friends with any of those mothers; the ladies she is familiar-fond with, are the ladies who have no children, or the ladies whose families are all up-grown. You think that was wrong of the mistress?"

He put the question to Rosamond, who was toying thoughtfully with one of the baby's hands which was resting in her's. "I think Mrs. Treverton was very much to be pitied," she answered, gently lifting the child's hand to her lips.

"Then I, for my part, think so too," said Uncle Joseph. "To be pitied? — yes! To be more pitied some months after, when there is still no child and no hope of a child, and the good sea-captain says, one day, 'I rust here, I get old with much idleness, I want to be on the sea again. I shall ask for a ship.' And he asks for a ship, and they give it him, and he goes away on his cruises — with much kissing and fondness at parting from his wife — but still he goes away. And when he is gone, the mistress comes in again where Sarah is at work for her on a fine new gown, and snatches it away, and casts it down on the floor, and throws after it all the fine jewels she has got on her table, and stamps and cries with the misery and the passion that is in her. 'I would give all those fine things, and go in rags for the rest of my life to have a child!' she says. 'I am losing my husband's love; he would never have gone away from me if I had brought him a child!' Then she looks in the glass, and says between her teeth, 'yes! yes! I am a fine woman with a fine figure, and I would change places with the ugliest, crookedest wretch in all creation, if I could only have a child!' And then she tells Sarah that the captain's

brother spoke the vilest of all vile words of her, when she was married, because she was an artist on the stage; and she says, 'If I have no child, who but he — the rascal-monster that I wish I could kill! — who but he will come to possess all that the captain has got?' And then she cries again, and says, 'I am losing his love — ah, I know it, I know it! — I am losing his love!' Nothing that Sarah can say will alter her thoughts about that. And the months go on, and the sea-captain comes back, and still there is always the same secret grief growing and growing in the mistress's heart — growing and growing till it is now the third year since the marriage, and there is no hope yet of a child; and, once more the sea-captain gets tired on the land, and goes off again for his cruises — long cruises, this time; away, away, away, at the other end of the world."

Here Uncle Joseph paused once more, apparently hesitating a little about how he should go on with the narrative. His mind seemed to be soon relieved of its doubts, but his face saddened, and his tones sunk lower, when he addressed Rosamond again.

"I must, if you please, go away from the mistress now," he said, "and get back to Sarah, my niece, and say one word also of a mining man, with the Cornish name of Polwheal. This was a young man that worked well and got good wage, and kept a good character. He lived with his mother in the little village that is near the ancient house; and, seeing Sarah from time to time, took much fancy to her, and she to him. So the end came that the marriage-promise was between them given and taken; as it happened, about the time when the sea-captain was back after his first cruises, and just when he was thinking of going away in a ship again. Against

the marriage-promise nor he nor the lady his wife had a word to object, for the miner, Polwheal, had good wage and kept a good character. Only the mistress said that the loss of Sarah would be sad to her — very sad; and Sarah answered that there was yet no hurry to part. So the weeks go on, and the sea-captain sails away again for his long cruises; and about the same time also the mistress finds out that Sarah frets and looks not like herself, and that the miner, Polwheal, he lurks here and lurks there, round about the house; and she says to herself, 'So! so! Am I standing too much in the way of this marriage? For Sarah's sake that shall not be!' And she calls for them both one evening, and talks to them kindly, and sends away to put up the banns next morning the young man Polwheal. That night, it is his turn to go down into the Porthgenna mine, and work after the hours of the day. With his heart all light, down into that dark he goes. When he rises to the world again, it is the dead body of him that is drawn up — the dead body, with all the young life, by the fall of a rock, crushed out in a moment. The news flies here; the news flies there. With no break, with no warning, with no comfort near, it comes on a sudden to Sarah, my niece. When, to her sweetheart that evening she had said good-bye, she was a young, pretty girl; when six little weeks after, she, from the sick-bed where the shock threw her, got up, — all her youth was gone, all her hair was grey, and in her eyes the fright-look was fixed that has never left them since."

The simple words drew the picture of the miner's death, and of all that followed it, with a startling distinctness — with a fearful reality. Rosamond shuddered and looked at her husband. "Oh, Lenny!" she mur-

mured, "the first news of your blindness was a sore trial to me — but what was it to *this*!"

"Pity her!" said the old man. "Pity her for what she suffered then! Pity her for what came after, that was worse! Yet five, six, seven weeks pass, after the death of the mining-man, and Sarah, in the body suffers less, but in the mind suffers more. The mistress, who is kind and good to her as any sister could be, finds out, little by little, something in her face which is not the pain-look, not the fright-look, not the grief-look; something which the eyes can see but which the tongue cannot put into words. She looks and thinks, looks and thinks, till there steals into her mind a doubt which makes her tremble at herself, which drives her straight forward into Sarah's room, which sets her eyes searching through and through Sarah to her inmost heart. 'There is something on your mind besides your grief for the dead and gone,' she says, and catches Sarah by both the arms before she can turn away, and looks her in the face, front to front, with curious eyes that search and suspect steadily. 'The miner-man, Polwheal,' she says; 'my mind misgives me about the miner-man, Polwheal. Sarah! I have been more friend to you than mistress. As your friend I ask you, now — tell me all the truth?' The question waits; but no word of answer! only Sarah struggles to get away, and the mistress holds her tighter yet, and goes on and says, 'I know that the marriage-promise passed between you and miner Polwheal; I know that if ever there was truth in man, there was truth in him; I know that he went out from this place to put the banns up, for you and for him, in the church. Have secrets from all the world besides, Sarah, but have none from *me*. Tell me, this minute, tell me the truth!

Of all the lost creatures in this big, wide world, are you —?’ Before she can say the words that are next to come, Sarah falls on her knees, and cries out suddenly to be let go away to hide and die, and be heard of no more. That was all the answer she gave. It was enough for the truth, then; it is enough for the truth now.”

He sighed bitterly, and ceased speaking for a little while. No voice broke the reverent silence that followed his last words. The one living sound that stirred in the stillness of the room, was the light breathing of the child as he lay asleep in his mother’s arms.

“That was all the answer,” repeated the old man, “and the mistress who heard it, says nothing for some time after, but still looks straight forward into Sarah’s face, and grows paler and paler the longer she looks — paler and paler, till on a sudden she starts, and at one flash the red flies back into her face. ‘No,’ she says, whispering and looking at the door, ‘once your friend, Sarah, always your friend. Stay in this house, keep your own counsel, do as I bid you, and leave the rest to me.’ And with that, she turns round quick on her heel, and falls to walking up and down the room, — faster, faster, faster, till she is out of breath. Then she pulls the bell with an angry jerk, and calls out loud at the door, ‘The horses! I want to ride;’ then turns upon Sarah, ‘My gown for riding in! Pluck up your heart, poor creature! On my life and honour I will save you. My gown, my gown, then; I am mad for a gallop in the open air!’ And she goes out, in a fever of the blood, and gallops, gallops, till the horse reeks again, and the groom-man who rides after her wonders if she is mad. When she comes back, for all that ride in the air, she is not tired. The whole evening after, she is now walking

about the room, and now striking loud tunes all mixed up together on the piano. At the bed-time, she cannot rest. Twice, three times in the night she frightens Sarah by coming in to see how she does, and by saying always those same words over again, 'Keep your own counsel, do as I bid you, and leave the rest to me.' In the morning, she lies late, sleeps, gets up very pale and quiet, and says to Sarah, 'No word more between us two of what happened yesterday — no word till the time comes when you fear the eyes of every stranger who looks at you. Then I shall speak again. Till that time let us be as we were before I put the question yesterday, and before you told the truth.'"

At this point he broke the thread of the narrative again, explaining, as he did so, that his memory was growing confused about a question of time, which he wished to state correctly in introducing the series of events that were next to be described.

"Ah, well! well!" he said, shaking his head, after vainly endeavouring to pursue the lost recollection. "For once, I must acknowledge that I forget. Whether it was two months, or whether it was three, after the mistress said those last words to Sarah, I know not — but at the end of the one time, or of the other, she, one morning, orders her carriage and goes away alone to Truro. In the evening she comes back with two large, flat baskets. On the cover of the one there is a card, and written on it are the letters, 'S. L.' On the cover of the other there is a card, and written on it are the letters, 'R. T.' The baskets are taken into the mistress's room, and Sarah is called, and the mistress says to her, 'Open the basket with S. L. on it; for those are the letters of your name, and the things in it are yours.' Inside, there is first a

box, which holds a grand bonnet of black lace; then a fine, dark shawl; then black silk of the best kind, enough to make a gown; then linen and stuff for the under garments, all of the finest sort. 'Make up those things to fit yourself,' says the mistress. 'You are so much littler than I, that to make the things up, new, is less trouble, than from my fit to yours, to alter old gowns.' Sarah, to all this, says in astonishment, 'Why?' And the mistress answers, 'I will have no questions. Remember what I said; keep your own counsel, and leave the rest to me!' So she goes out, and leaves Sarah to work; and the next thing she does is to send for the doctor to see her. He asks what is the matter; gets for answer that she feels strangely, and not like herself; also that she thinks the soft air of Cornwall makes her weak. The days pass, and the doctor comes and goes, and, say what he may, those two answers are always the only two that he can get. All this time, Sarah is at work; and when she has done, the mistress says, 'Now for the other basket, with R. T. on it; for those are the letters of my name, and the things in it are mine.' Inside this, there is first a box which holds a common bonnet of black straw; then a coarse dark shawl; then a gown of good common black stuff; then linen, and other things for the under garments, that are only of the sort called second best. 'Make up all that rubbish,' says the mistress, 'to fit me. No questions! You have always done as I told you; do as I tell you now, or you are a lost woman.' When the rubbish is made up, she tries it on, and looks in the glass, and laughs in a way that is wild and desperate to hear. 'Do I make a fine, buxom, comely servant-woman?' she says. 'Ha! but I have acted that part times enough in my past days on the theatre-

scene.' And then she takes off the clothes again, and bids Sarah pack them up at once in one trunk, and pack the things she has made for herself in another. 'The doctor orders me to go away out of this damp-soft Cornwall climate, to where the air is fresh, and dry, and cheerful-keen!' she says, and laughs again, till the room rings with it. At the same time, Sarah begins to pack, and takes some knick-knack things off the table, and among them a brooch which has on it the likeness of the sea-captain's face. The mistress sees her, turns white in the cheeks, trembles all over, snatches the brooch away, and locks it up in the cabinet in a great hurry, as if the look of it frightened her. 'I shall leave that behind me,' she says, and turns round on her heel, and goes quickly out of the room. You guess, now, what the thing was that Mistress Treverton had it in her mind to do?"

He addressed the question to Rosamond first, and then repeated it to Leonard. They both answered in the affirmative, and entreated him to go on.

"You guess?" he said. "It is more than Sarah, at that time, could do. What with the misery in her own mind, and the strange ways and strange words of her mistress, the wits that were in her were all confused. Nevertheless, what her mistress has said to her that she has always done; and together alone those two from the house of Porthgenna drive away. Not a word says the mistress till they have got to the journey's end for the first day, and are stopping at their inn among strangers for the night. Then at last she speaks out, 'Put you on, Sarah, the good linen and the good gown to-morrow,' she says, 'but keep the common bonnet and the common shawl, till we get into the carriage again. I shall put

on the coarse linen and the coarse gown, and keep the good bonnet and shawl. We shall pass so the people at the inn, on our way to the carriage, without very much risk of surprising them by our change of gowns. When we are out on the road again, we can change bonnets and shawls in the carriage — and then, it is all done. You are the married lady, Mrs. Treverton, and I am your maid who waits on you, Sarah Leeson.' At that, the glimmering on Sarah's mind breaks in at last: she shakes with the fright it gives her, and all she can say is, 'Oh mistress! for the love of Heaven, what is it you mean to do?' 'I mean,' the mistress answers, 'to save you, my faithful servant, from disgrace and ruin; to prevent every penny that the captain has got from going to that rascal-monster, his brother, who slandered me; and, last and most, I mean to keep my husband from going away to sea again, by making him love me as he has never loved me yet. Must I say more, you poor afflicted, frightened creature — or is it enough so?' And all that Sarah can answer, is to cry bitter tears, and to say faintly, 'No.' 'Do you doubt,' says the mistress, and grips her by the arm, and looks her close in the face with fierce eyes, 'Do you doubt which is best, to cast yourself into the world forsaken, and disgraced, and ruined, or to save yourself from shame, and make a friend of me for the rest of your life? You weak, wavering, baby-woman, if you cannot decide for yourself, I shall for you. As I will, so it shall be! Tomorrow, and the day after, and the day after that, we go on and on, up to the north, where my good fool of a doctor says the air is cheerful-keen — up to the north, where nobody knows me or has heard my name. I, the maid, shall spread the report that you, the lady, are

weak in your health. No strangers shall you see, but the doctor and the nurse, when the time to call them comes. Who they may be, I know not; but this I do know, that the one and the other will serve our purpose without the least suspicion of what it is; and that when we get back to Cornwall again, the secret between us two will to no third person have been trusted, and will remain a Dead Secret to the end of the world!" With all the strength of the strong will that is in her, at the hush of night and in a house of strangers, she speaks those words to the woman of all women the most frightened, the most afflicted, the most helpless, the most ashamed. What need to say the end? On that night Sarah first stooped her shoulders to the burden that has weighed heavier and heavier on them with every year, for all her after-life."

"How many days did they travel towards the north?" asked Rosamond, eagerly. "Where did the journey end? In England or in Scotland?"

"In England," answered Uncle Joseph. "But the name of the place escapes my foreign tongue. It was a little town by the side of the sea — the great sea that washes between my country and yours. There they stopped, and there they waited till the time came to send for the doctor and the nurse. And as Mistress Treverton had said it should be, so, from the first to the last, it was. The doctor and the nurse, and the people of the house were all strangers; and to this day, if they still live, they believe that Sarah was the sea-captain's wife, and that Mistress Treverton was the maid who waited on her. Not till they were far back on their way home with the child, did the two change gowns again, and return each to her proper place. The first

friend at Porthgenna that the mistress sends for to show the child to, when she gets back, is the other doctor who lives there. 'Did you think what was the matter with me, when you sent me away to change the air?' she says, and laughs. And the doctor, he laughs too, and says, 'Yes, surely! but I was too cunning to say what I thought in those early days, because, at such times, there is always fear of a mistake. And you found the fine dry air so good for you that you stopped?' he says. 'Well, that was right! right for yourself and right also for the child.' And the doctor laughs again and the mistress with him, and Sarah who stands by and hears them, feels as if her heart would burst within her, with the horror, and the misery, and the shame of that deceit. When the doctor's back is turned, she goes down on her knees, and begs and prays with all her soul that the mistress will repent, and send her away with her child, to be heard of at Porthgenna no more. The mistress, with that tyrant-will of hers, has but four words of answer to give: — 'It is too late!' Five weeks after, the sea-captain comes back, and the 'Too late' is a truth that no repentance can ever alter more. The mistress's cunning hand that has guided the deceit from the first, guides it always to the last — guides it so that the captain, for the love of her and of the child, goes back to the sea no more — guides it till the time when she lays her down on the bed to die, and leaves all the burden of the secret, and all the guilt of the confession, to Sarah — to Sarah who, under the tyranny of that tyrant-will, has lived in the house, for five long years, a stranger to her own child!"

"Five years!" murmured Rosamond, raising the baby gently in her arms, till his face touched hers. "Oh me!"

five long years a stranger to the blood of her blood, to the heart of her heart!"

"And all the years after!" said the old man. "The lonesome years and years among strangers, with no sight of the child that was growing up, with no heart to pour the story of her sorrow into the ear of any living creature — not even into mine! 'Better,' I said to her, when she could speak to me no more, and when her face was turned away again on the pillow; 'a thousand times better, my child, if you had told the Secret!' 'Could I tell it,' she said, 'to the master who trusted me? Could I tell it afterwards to the child, whose very birth was a reproach to me? Could she listen to the story of her mother's shame, told by her mother's lips? How will she listen to it now, Uncle Joseph, when she hears it from *you*? Remember the life she has led, and the high place she has held in the world. How can she forgive me? How can she ever look at me in kindness again!'"

"You never left her," cried Rosamond, interposing before he could say more; "surely, surely, you never left her with that thought in her heart!"

Uncle Joseph's head drooped on his breast. "What words of mine could change it?" he asked, sadly.

"Oh, Lenny, do you hear that! I must leave you, and leave the baby. I must go to her, or those last words about me will break my heart." The passionate tears burst from her eyes as she spoke; and she rose hastily from her seat, with the child in her arms.

"Not to-night," said Uncle Joseph. "She said to me at parting, 'I can bear no more to-night; give me till the morning to get as strong as I can.'"

"Oh, go back then yourself!" cried Rosamond. "Go,

for God's sake, without wasting another moment, and make her think of me as she ought! Tell her how I listened to you, with my own child sleeping on my bosom all the time — tell her — oh, no, no! words are too cold for it! — Come here, come close, Uncle Joseph (I shall always call you so now); come close to me and kiss my child — *her* grandchild! — Kiss him on this cheek because it has lain nearest to my heart. And now, go back, kind and dear old man — go back to her bedside, and say nothing but that *I* sent that kiss to *her*!”

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Close of Day.

THE night, with its wakeful anxieties, wore away at last; and the morning light dawned hopefully, for it brought with it the promise of an end to Rosamond's suspense.

The first event of the day was the arrival of Mr. Nixon, who had received a note on the previous evening, written by Leonard's desire, to invite him to breakfast. Before the lawyer withdrew, he had settled with Mr. and Mrs. Frankland all the preliminary arrangements that were necessary to effect the restoration of the purchase-money of Porthgenna Tower, and had despatched a messenger with a letter to Bayswater, announcing his intention of calling upon Andrew Treverton that afternoon, on private business of importance relating to the personal estate of his late brother.

Towards noon, Uncle Joseph arrived at the hotel to take Rosamond with him to the house where her mother lay ill.

He came in, talking, in the highest spirits, of the wonderful change for the better that had been wrought in his niece by the affectionate message which he had taken to her on the previous evening. He declared that it had made her look happier, stronger, younger, all in a moment; that it had given her the longest, quietest, sweetest night's sleep she had enjoyed for years and years past; and, last, best triumph of all, that its good influence had been acknowledged, not an hour since, by the doctor himself. Rosamond listened thankfully, but it was with a wandering attention, with a mind ill at ease. When she had taken leave of her husband, and when she and Uncle Joseph were out in the street together, there was something in the prospect of the approaching interview between her mother and herself, which, in spite of her efforts to resist the sensation, almost daunted her. If they could have come together, and have recognised each other without time to think what should be first said or done on either side, the meeting would have been nothing more than the natural result of the discovery of the Secret. But, as it was, the waiting, the doubting, the mournful story of the past, which had filled up the emptiness of the last day of suspense, all had their depressing effect on Rosamond's impulsive disposition. Without a thought in her heart which was not tender, compassionate, and true towards her mother, she now felt, nevertheless, a vague sense of embarrassment, which increased to positive uneasiness the nearer she and the old man drew to their short journey's end. As they stopped at last at the house-door, she was shocked to find herself thinking beforehand, of what first words it would be best to say, of what first things it would be best to do, as if she had

been about to visit a total stranger, whose favourable opinion she wished to secure, and whose readiness to receive her cordially was a matter of doubt.

The first person whom they saw after the door was opened, was the doctor. He advanced towards them from a little empty room at the end of the hall, and asked permission to speak with Mrs. Frankland for a few minutes. Leaving Rosamond to her interview with the doctor, Uncle Joseph gaily ascended the stairs to tell his niece of her arrival, with an activity which might well have been envied by many a man of half his years.

"Is she worse? Is there any danger in my seeing her?" asked Rosamond, as the doctor led her into the empty room.

"Quite the contrary," he replied. "She is much better this morning; and the improvement, I find, is mainly due to the composing and cheering influence on her mind of a message which she received from you last night. It is the discovery of this which makes me anxious to speak to you now on the subject of one particular symptom of her mental condition, which surprised and alarmed me when I first discovered it, and which has perplexed me very much ever since. She is suffering — not to detain you, and to put the matter at once in the plainest terms — under a mental hallucination of a very extraordinary kind, which, so far as I have observed it, affects her, generally, towards the close of day, when the light gets obscure. At such times, there is an expression in her eyes, as if she fancied some person had walked suddenly into the room. She looks and talks at perfect vacancy, as you or I might look or talk at some one who was really standing and listening

to us. The old man, her uncle, tells me that he first observed this when she came to see him (in Cornwall, I think he said) a short time since. She was speaking to him then on private affairs of her own, when she suddenly stopped, just as the evening was closing in, startled him by a question on the old superstitious subject of the reappearance of the dead, and then, looking away at a shadowed corner of the room, began to talk at it — exactly as I have seen her look and heard her talk up-stairs. Whether she fancies that she is pursued by an apparition, or whether she imagines that some living person enters her room at certain times, is more than I can say; and the old man gives me no help in guessing at the truth. Can you throw any light on the matter?"

"I hear of it now for the first time," answered Rosamond, looking at the doctor in amazement and alarm.

"Perhaps," he rejoined, "she may be more communicative with you than she is with me. If you could manage to be by her bedside at dusk to-day or to-morrow, and, if you think you are not likely to be frightened by it, I should very much wish you to see and hear her, when she is under the influence of her delusion. I have tried in vain to draw her attention away from it, at the time, or to get her to speak of it afterwards. You have evidently considerable influence over her, and you might therefore succeed where I have failed. In her state of health, I attach great importance to clearing her mind of everything that clouds and oppresses it, and especially of such a serious hallucination as that which I have been describing. If you could succeed in combating it, you would be doing her the greatest service, and would be

materially helping my efforts to improve her health. Do you mind trying the experiment?"

Rosamond promised to devote herself unreservedly to this service or to any other which was for the patient's good. The doctor thanked her, and led the way back into the hall again. Uncle Joseph was descending the stairs as they came out of the room. "She is ready and longing to see you," he whispered in Rosamond's ear.

"I am sure I need not impress on you again the very serious necessity of keeping her composed," said the doctor, taking his leave. "It is, I assure you, no exaggeration to say that her life depends on it."

Rosamond bowed to him in silence, and in silence followed the old man up the stairs.

At the door of a back room on the second floor, Uncle Joseph stopped.

"She is there," he whispered eagerly. "I leave you to go in by yourself, for it is best that you should be alone with her at first. I shall walk about the streets in the fine warm sunshine, and think of you both, and come back after a little. Go in; and the blessing and the mercy of God go with you!" He lifted her hand to his lips, and softly and quickly descended the stairs again.

Rosamond stood alone before the door. A momentary tremor shook her from head to foot as she stretched out her hand to knock at it. The same sweet voice that she had last heard in her bedroom at West Winston, answered her now. As its tones fell on her ear, a thought of her child stole quietly into her heart, and stilled its quick throbbing. She opened the door at once, and went in.

Neither the look of the room inside, nor the view

from the window; neither its characteristic ornaments, nor its prominent pieces of furniture — none of the objects in it or about it, which would have caught her quick observation at other times, struck it now. From the moment when she opened the door, she saw nothing but the pillows of the bed, the head resting on them, and the face turned towards hers. As she stepped across the threshold, that face changed; the eyelids drooped a little, and the pale cheeks were tinged suddenly with burning red.

Was her mother ashamed to look at her?

The bare doubt freed Rosamond in an instant from all the self-distrust, all the embarrassment, all the hesitation about choosing her words and directing her actions which had fettered her generous impulses up to this time. She ran to the bed, raised the worn shrinking figure in her arms, and laid the poor weary head gently on her warm, young bosom. "I have come at last, mother, to take my turn at nursing you," she said. Her heart swelled as those simple words came from it — her full eyes overflowed — she could say no more.

"Don't cry!" murmured the faint, sweet voice timidly. "I have no right to bring you here, and make you sorry. Don't, don't cry!"

"Oh, hush! hush! I shall do nothing but cry if you talk to me like that!" said Rosamond. "Let us forget that we have ever been parted — call me by my name — speak to me as I shall speak to my own child, if God spares me to see him grow up. Say 'Rosamond,' and — oh, pray, pray, — tell me to do something for you!" She tore asunder, passionately, the strings of her bonnet, and threw it from her on the nearest chair. "Look! here is your glass of lemonade on the table.

Say, 'Rosamond, bring me my lemonade!' say it familiarly, mother! say it as if you knew that I was bound to obey you!"

She repeated the words after her daughter, but still not in steady tones — repeated them with a sad, wondering smile, and with a lingering of the voice on the name of Rosamond, as if it was a luxury to her to utter it.

"You made me so happy with that message, and with the kiss you sent me from your child," she said, when Rosamond had given her the lemonade, and was seated quietly by the bedside again. "It was such a kind way of saying that you pardoned me! It gave me all the courage I wanted to speak to you as I am speaking now. Perhaps my illness has changed me — but I don't feel frightened and strange with you; as I thought I should, at our first meeting after you knew the Secret. I think I shall soon get well enough to see your child. Is he like what you were at his age? If he is, he must be very, very —" She stopped. "I may think of that," she added, after waiting a little, "but I had better not talk of it, or I shall cry too; and I want to have done with sorrow now."

While she spoke those words, while her eyes were fixed with wistful eagerness on her daughter's face, the old instinct of neatness was still mechanically at work in her weak, wasted fingers. Rosamond had tossed her gloves from her on the bed but the minute before; and already her mother had taken them up, and was smoothing them out carefully and folding them neatly together, all the while she spoke.

"Call me 'mother' again," she said, as Rosamond took the gloves from her and thanked her with a kiss for folding them up. "I have never heard you call

me 'mother' till now — never, never till now, from the day when you were born!"

Rosamond checked the tears that were rising in her eyes again, and repeated the word.

"It is all the happiness I want, to lie here, and look at you, and hear you say that! Is there any other woman in the world, my love, who has a face so beautiful and so kind as yours?" She paused, and smiled faintly.

"I can't look at those sweet rosy lips now," she said, "without thinking how many kisses they owe me!"

"If you had only let me pay the debt before!" said Rosamond, taking her mother's hand, as she was accustomed to take her child's, and placing it on her neck. "If you had only spoken the first time we met, when you came to nurse me! How sorrowfully I have thought of that since! Oh, mother, did I distress you much, in my ignorance? Did it make you cry when you thought of me after that?"

"Distress me! All my distress, Rosamond, has been of my own making, not of yours. My kind, thoughtful love! you said, 'Don't be hard on her' — do you remember? When I was being sent away, deservedly sent away, dear, for frightening you, you said to your husband, 'Don't be hard on her!' Only five words — but, oh, what a comfort it was to me, afterwards, to think that you had said them! I did want to kiss you so, Rosamond, when I was brushing your hair: I had such a hard fight of it to keep from crying out loud when I heard you, behind the bed-curtains, wishing your little child good-night. My heart was in my mouth, choking me all that time. I took your part afterwards, when I went back to my mistress — I wouldn't hear her say a

harsh word of you. I could have looked a hundred mistresses in the face then, and contradicted them all. Oh no, no, no! you never distressed me. My worst grief at going away was years and years before I came to nurse you at West Winston. It was when I left my place at Porthgenna; when I stole into your nursery, on that dreadful morning, and when I saw you with both your little arms round my master's neck. The doll you had taken to bed with you was in one of your hands; and your head was resting on the captain's bosom — just as mine rests now — oh, so happily, Rosamond! — on yours. I heard the last words he was speaking to you! words you were too young to remember. 'Hush! Rosie, dear,' he said, 'Don't cry any more for poor mamma. Think of poor papa, and try to comfort him!' There, my love — there was the bitterest distress, and the hardest to bear! I, your own mother, standing like a spy, and hearing him say that to the child I dared not own! 'Think of poor papa!' My own Rosamond! you know, now, what father *I* thought of when he said those words! How could I tell him the Secret? how could I give him the letter, with his wife dead that morning — with nobody but you to comfort him — with the awful truth crushing down upon my heart, at every word he spoke, as heavily as ever the rock crushed down upon the father you never saw!"

"Don't speak of it now!" said Rosamond. "Don't let us refer again to the past: I know all I ought to know, all I wish to know of it. We will talk of the future, mother, and of happier times to come. Let me tell you about my husband. If any words can praise him as he ought to be praised, and thank him as he ought to be thanked, I am sure mine ought — I am sure yours will!"

Let me tell you what he said and what he did when I read him the letter that I found in the Myrtle Room. Yes, yes, do let me!"

Warned by a remembrance of the doctor's last injunctions; trembling in secret, as she felt under her hand the heavy, toilsome, irregular heaving of her mother's heart, as she saw the rapid changes of colour from pale to red, and from red to pale again that fluttered across her mother's face, she resolved to let no more words pass between them which were of a nature to recal painfully the sorrow and the suffering of the years that were gone. After describing the interview between her husband and herself which had ended in the disclosure of the Secret, she led her mother, with compassionate abruptness, to speak of the future, of the time when she would be able to travel again, of the happiness of returning together to Cornwall, of the little festival they might hold on arriving at Uncle Joseph's house in Truro, and of the time after that when they might go on still further to Porthgenna, or perhaps to some other place where new scenes and new faces might help them to forget all sad associations which it was best to think of no more.

Rosamond was still speaking on these topics; her mother was still listening to her with growing interest in every word that she said, when Uncle Joseph returned. He brought in with him a basket of flowers and a basket of fruit, which he held up in triumph at the foot of his niece's bed.

"I have been walking about, my child, in the fine bright sunshine," he said, "and waiting to give your face plenty of time to look happy, so that I might see it again as I want to see it always, for the rest of my life.

Aha, Sarah! it is I who have brought the right doctor to cure you!" he added gaily, looking at Rosamond. "She has made you better already: wait but a little while longer, and she shall get you up from your bed again, with your two cheeks as red, and your heart as light, and your tongue as fast to chatter as mine. See! the fine flowers, and the fruit I have bought that is nice to your eyes, and nice to your nose, and nicest of all to put into your mouth. It is festival-time with us to-day, and we must make the room bright, bright, bright, all over. And then, there is your dinner to come soon; I have seen it on the dish — a cherub among chicken-fowls! And, after that, there is your fine sound sleep, with Mozart to sing the cradle-song, and with me to sit for watch, and to go down stairs when you wake up again, and fetch you your cup of tea. Ah, my child, my child, what a fine thing it is to have come at last to this festival-day!"

With a bright look at Rosamond, and with both his hands full of flowers, he turned away from his niece to begin decorating the room. Except when she thanked the old man for the presents he had brought, her attention had never wandered, all the while he had been speaking, from her daughter's face; and her first words, when he was silent again, were addressed to Rosamond alone.

"While I am happy with *my* child," she said, "I am keeping you from *yours*. I, of all persons, ought to be the last to part you from each other too long. Go back now, my love, to your husband and your child; and leave me to my grateful thoughts and my dreams of better times."

"If you please, answer Yes to that, for your mother's

sake," said Uncle Joseph, before Rosamond could reply. "The doctor says, she must take her repose in the day as well as her repose in the night. And how shall I get her to close her eyes, so long as she has the temptation to keep them open upon *you*?"

Rosamond felt the truth of those last words, and consented to go back for a few hours to the hotel, on the understanding that she was to resume her place at the bedside in the evening. After making this arrangement, she waited long enough in the room to see the meal brought up which Uncle Joseph had announced, and to aid the old man in encouraging her mother to partake of it. When the tray had been removed, and when the pillows of the bed had been comfortably arranged by her own hands, she at last prevailed on herself to take leave.

Her mother's arms lingered round her neck; her mother's cheek nestled fondly against hers. "Go, my dear, go now, or I shall get too selfish to part with you even for a few hours," murmured the sweet voice in its lowest, softest tones. "My own Rosamond! I have no words to bless you that are good enough; no words to thank you that will speak as gratefully for me as they ought! Happiness has been long in reaching me, — but, oh how mercifully it has come at last!"

Before she passed the door, Rosamond stopped and looked back into the room. The table, the mantel-piece, the little framed prints on the wall were bright with flowers; the musical-box was just playing the first sweet notes of the air from Mozart; Uncle Joseph was seated already in his accustomed place by the bed, with the basket of fruit on his knees; the pale, worn face on the pillow was tenderly lighted up by a smile: peace and

comfort, and repose, all mingled together happily in the sick room, all joined in leading Rosamond's thoughts to dwell quietly on the hope of a happier time.

Three hours passed. The last glory of the sun was lighting the long summer day to its rest in the western heaven, when Rosamond returned to her mother's bedside.

She entered the room softly. The one window in it looked towards the west, and on that side of the bed the chair was placed which Uncle Joseph had occupied when she left him, and in which she now found him still seated on her return. He raised his finger to his lips, and looked towards the bed, as she opened the door. Her mother was asleep, with her hand resting in the hand of the old man.

As Rosamond noiselessly advanced, she saw that Uncle Joseph's eyes looked dim and weary. The constraint of the position that he occupied, which made it impossible for him to move without the risk of awakening his niece, seemed to be beginning to fatigue him. Rosamond removed her bonnet and shawl, and made a sign to him to rise and let her take his place.

"Yes, yes!" she whispered, seeing him reply by a shake of the head. "Let me take my turn, while you go out a little and enjoy the cool evening air. There is no fear of waking her: her hand is not clasping your's, but only resting in it — let me steal mine into its place gently, and we shall not disturb her."

She slipped her hand under her mother's while she spoke. Uncle Joseph smiled as he rose from his chair, and resigned his place to her. "You will have your way," he said; "you are too quick and sharp for an old man like me."

"Has she been long asleep?" asked Rosamond.

"Nearly two hours," answered Uncle Joseph. "But it has not been the good sleep I wanted for her; — a dreaming, talking, restless sleep. It is only ten little minutes, since she has been so quiet as you see her now."

"Surely you let in too much light?" whispered Rosamond, looking round at the window, through which the glow of the evening sky poured warmly into the room.

"No, no!" he hastily rejoined. "Asleep or awake, she always wants the light. If I go away for a little while, as you tell me, and if it gets on to be dusk before I come back, light both those candles on the chimney-piece. I shall try to be here again before that; but if the time slips by too fast for me, and if it so happens that she wakes and talks strangely, and looks much away from you into that far corner of the room there, remember that the matches and the candles are together on the chimney-piece, and that the sooner you light them after the dim twilight-time, the better it will be." With those words he stole on tiptoe to the door and went out.

His parting directions recalled Rosamond to a remembrance of what had passed between the doctor and herself that morning. She looked round again anxiously to the window. The sun was just sinking beyond the distant house-tops: the close of day was not far off. As she turned her head once more towards the bed, a momentary chill crept over her. She trembled a little, partly at the sensation itself, partly at the recollection it aroused of that other chill which had struck her in the solitude of the Myrtle Room.

Stirred by the mysterious sympathies of touch, her

mother's hand at the same instant moved in hers, and over the sad peacefulness of the weary face there fluttered a momentary trouble — the flying shadow of a dream. The pale, parted lips opened, closed, quivered, opened again; the faint breaths came and went quickly and more quickly; the head moved uneasily on the pillow; the eyelids half unclosed themselves; low, faint, moaning sounds poured rapidly from the lips — changed ere long to half-articulated sentences — then merged softly into intelligible speech, and uttered these words:—

“Swear that you will not destroy this paper! Swear that you will not take this paper away with you if you leave the house!”

The words that followed these were whispered so rapidly and so low that Rosamond's ear failed to catch them. They were followed by a short silence. Then the dreaming voice spoke again suddenly, and spoke louder.

“Where? where? where?” it said. “In the book-case? In the table-drawer? — Stop! stop! In the picture of the ghost ——”

The last words struck cold on Rosamond's heart. She drew back suddenly with a movement of alarm, — checked herself the instant after, and bent down over the pillow again. But it was too late. Her hand had moved abruptly when she drew back, and her mother woke with a start and a faint cry, — with vacant, terror-stricken eyes, and with the perspiration standing thick on her forehead.

“Mother!” cried Rosamond, raising her on the pillow. “I have come back. Don't you know me?”

“Mother?” she repeated, in mournful, questioning tones. “Mother?” At the second repetition of the word

a bright flush of delight and surprise broke out on her face, and she clasped both arms suddenly round her daughter's neck. "Oh, my own Rosamond!" she said. "If I had ever been used to waking up and seeing your dear face look at me, I should have known you sooner, in spite of my dream! Did you wake me, my love? or did I wake myself?"

"I am afraid I woke you, mother."

"Don't say 'afraid.' I would wake from the sweetest sleep that ever woman had, to see your face and to hear you say 'Mother' to me. You have delivered me, my love, from the terror of one of my dreadful dreams. Oh, Rosamond, I think I should live to be happy in your love, if I could only get Porthgenna Tower out of my mind — if I could only never remember again the bed-chamber where my mistress died, and the room where I hid the letter —"

"We will try and forget Porthgenna Tower now," said Rosamond. "Shall we talk about other places where I have lived, which you have never seen? Or shall I read to you, mother? Have you got any book here that you are fond of?"

She looked, across the bed, at the table on the other side. There was nothing on it but some bottles of medicine, a few of Uncle Joseph's flowers in a glass of water, and a little oblong work-box. She looked round at the chest of drawers behind her — there were no books placed on the top of it. Before she turned towards the bed again, her eyes wandered aside to the window. The sun was lost beyond the distant housetops: the close of day was nearer at hand.

"If I could forget! O, me, if I could only forget!"

said her mother, sighing wearily and beating her hand on the coverlid of the bed.

"Are you well enough, dear, to amuse yourself with work?" asked Rosamond, pointing to the little oblong box on the table, and trying to lead the conversation to a harmless, every-day topic, by asking questions about it. "What work do you do? May I look at it?"

Her face lost its weary, suffering look, and brightened once more into a smile. "There is no work there," she said. "All the treasures I had in the world, till you came to see me, are shut up in that one little box. Open it, my love, and look inside."

Rosamond obeyed, placing the box on the bed where her mother could see it easily. The first object that she discovered inside, was a little book, in dark, worn binding. It was an old copy of Wesley's Hymns. Some withered blades of grass lay between its pages; and on one of its blank leaves was this inscription: — "Sarah Leeson, her book. The gift of Hugh Polwheal."

"Look at it, my dear," said her mother. "I want you to know it again. When my time comes to leave you, Rosamond, lay it on my bosom with your own dear hands, and put a little morsel of your hair with it, and bury me, in the grave in Porthgenna churchyard, where *he* has been waiting for me to come to him so many weary years. The other things in the box, Rosamond, belong to you; they are little stolen keepsakes that used to remind me of my child, when I was alone in the world. Perhaps, years and years hence, when your brown hair begins to grow grey like mine, you may like to show these poor trifles to your children when you talk about me. Don't mind telling them, Rosamond, how your mother sinned and how she suffered — you

can always let these little trifles speak for her at the end. The least of them will show that she always loved you."

She took out of the box a morsel of neatly-folded white paper, which had been placed under the book of Wesley's Hymns, opened it, and showed her daughter a few faded laburnum leaves that lay inside. "I took these from your bed, Rosamond, when I came as a stranger, to nurse you at West Winston. When I heard who the lady was who was staying at the inn, the temptation to risk anything for the sake of seeing you and seeing my grandchild was too much for me. I tried to take a ribbon out of your trunk, love, after I had taken the flowers — a ribbon that I knew had been round your neck. But the doctor came near at the time, and frightened me."

She folded the paper up again, laid it aside on the table, and drew from the box next a small print which had been taken from the illustrations to a pocket-book. It represented a little girl, in a gipsy-hat sitting by the water-side, and weaving a daisy chain. As a design, it was worthless; as a print, it had not even the mechanical merit of being a good impression. Underneath it a line was written in faintly-pencilled letters: — "Rosamond when I last saw her."

"It was never pretty enough for you," she said. "But still there was something in it that helped me to remember what my own love was like, when she was a little girl."

She put the engraving aside with the laburnum leaves, and took from the box a leaf of a copy-book, folded in two, out of which there dropped a tiny strip of paper, covered with small printed letters. She looked at the



strip of paper first. "The advertisement of your marriage, Rosamond," she said. "I used to be fond of reading it over and over again to myself when I was alone, and trying to fancy how you looked and what dress you wore. If I had only known when you were going to be married, I would have ventured into the church, my love, to look at you and at your husband. But that was not to be, — and perhaps it was best so, for the seeing you in that stolen way might only have made my trials harder to bear afterwards. I have had no other keepsake to remind me of you, Rosamond, except this leaf out of your first copy-book. The nurse-maid at Porthgenna tore up the rest one day to light the fire, and I took this leaf when she was not looking. See! you had not got as far as words then, — you could only do up-strokes and down-strokes. O me! how many times I have sat looking at this one leaf of paper, and trying to fancy that I saw your small child's hand travelling over it, with the pen held tight in the rosy little fingers. I think I have cried oftener, my darling, over that first copy of yours than over all my other keepsakes put together."

Rosamond turned aside her face towards the window to hide the tears which she could restrain no longer. As she wiped them away, the first sight of the darkening sky warned her that the twilight dimness was coming soon. How dull and faint the glow in the west looked now! how near it was to the close of day!

When she turned towards the bed again, her mother was still looking at the leaf of the copy-book.

"That nurse-maid who tore up all the rest of it to light the fire," she said, "was a kind friend to me, in those early days at Porthgenna. She used sometimes to

let me put you to bed, Rosamond; and never asked questions, or teased me, as the rest of them did. She risked the loss of her place by being so good to me. My mistress was afraid of my betraying myself and betraying her if I was much in the nursery, and she gave orders that I was not to go there, because it was not my place. None of the other women-servants were so often stopped from playing with you and kissing you, Rosamond, as I was. But the nursemaid — God bless and prosper her for it! — stood my friend. I often lifted you into your little cot, my love, and wished you good-night, when my mistress thought I was at work in her room. You used to say you liked your nurse better than you liked me, but you never told me so fretfully; and you always put your laughing lips up to mine whenever I asked you for a kiss!”

Rosamond laid her head gently on the pillow by the side of her mother's. “Try to think less of the past, dear, and more of the future,” she whispered pleadingly; “try to think of the time when my child will help you to recall those old days without their sorrow, — the time when you will teach him to put his lips up to yours, as I used to put mine.”

“I will try, Rosamond, — but my only thoughts of the future, for years and years past, have been thoughts of meeting you in heaven. If my sins are forgiven, how shall we meet there? Shall you be like my little child to me, — the child I never saw again after she was five years old? I wonder if the mercy of God will recompense me for our long separation on earth? I wonder if you will first appear to me in the happy world, with your child's face, and be what you should have been to me on earth, my little angel that I can carry in my

arms? If we pray in heaven, shall I teach you your prayers there, as some comfort to me for never having taught them to you here?"

She paused, smiled sadly, and, closing her eyes, gave herself in silence to the dream-thoughts that were still floating in her mind. Thinking that she might sink to rest again if she was left undisturbed, Rosamond neither moved nor spoke. After watching the peaceful face for some time, she became conscious that the light was fading on it slowly. As that conviction impressed itself on her, she looked round at the window once more. The western clouds wore their quiet twilight-colours already: the close of day had come.

The moment she moved in the chair, she felt her mother's hand on her shoulder. When she turned again toward the bed, she saw her mother's eyes open and looking at her — looking at her, as she thought, with a change in their expression, a change to vacancy.

"Why do I talk of heaven?" she said, turning her face suddenly towards the darkening sky, and speaking in low, muttering tones. "How do I know I am fit to go there? And yet, Rosamond, I am not guilty of breaking my oath to my mistress. You can say for me that I never destroyed the letter, and that I never took it away with me when I left the house."

"It will be dark soon, mother. Let me get up for one moment to light the candles."

Her hand crept softly upward, and clung fast round Rosamond's neck.

"I never swore to give him the letter," she said. "There was no crime in the hiding of it. You found it in a picture, Rosamond? They used to call it a picture of the Porthgenna ghost. Nobody knew how old it was

or when it came into the house. My mistress hated it, because the painted face had a strange likeness to hers. She told me when first I lived at Porthgenna, to take it down from the wall and destroy it. I was afraid to do that; so I hid it away, before ever you were born, in the Myrtle Room. You found the letter at the back of the picture, Rosamond? And yet that was a likely place to hide it in. Nobody had ever found the picture. Why should anybody find the letter that was hid in it?"

"Let me get a light, mother! I am sure you would like to have a light!"

"No! no light now. Give the darkness time to gather down there in the corner of the room. Lift me up close to you, and let me whisper."

The clinging arm tightened its grasp as Rosamond raised her in the bed. The fading light from the window fell full on her face, and was reflected dimly in her vacant eyes. "I am waiting for something, that comes at dusk, before the candles are lit," she whispered in low breathless tones. "Down there!" And she pointed away to the farthest corner of the room near the door.

"Mother! for God's sake, what is it! what has changed you so?"

"That's right! say, 'Mother.' If she does come, she can't stop when she hears you call me 'Mother,' when she sees us together at last, loving and knowing each other in spite of her. Oh, my kind, tender, pitying child! if you can only deliver me from her, how long I may live yet! — how happy we may both be!"

"Don't talk so! don't look so! Tell me quietly — dear, dear mother, — tell me quietly —"

"Hush! hush! I am going to tell you. She threatened me on her death-bed, if I thwarted her: she said

she would come to me from the other world. Rosamond! I *have* thwarted her, and she has kept her promise — all my life since, she has kept her promise! Look! Down there!”

Her left arm was still clasped round Rosamond's neck. She stretched her right arm out towards the far corner of the room, and shook her hand slowly at the empty air.

“Look!” she said. “There she is as she always comes to me, at the close of day, — with the coarse, black dress on, that my guilty hands made for her, — with the smile that there was on her face when she asked if she looked like a servant. Mistress! mistress! Oh, rest at last! the Secret is ours no longer! Rest at last! my child is my own again! Rest at last; and come between us no more!”

She ceased, panting for breath; and laid her hot, throbbing cheek against the cheek of her daughter. “Call me ‘Mother’ again!” she whispered. “Say it loud; and send her away from me for ever!”

Rosamond mastered the terror that shook in every limb, and pronounced the word.

Her mother leaned forward a little, still gasping heavily for breath, and looked with straining eyes into the quiet twilight dimness at the lower end of the room.

“*Gone!!!*” she cried suddenly, with a scream of exultation. “Oh, merciful, merciful God! gone at last!”

The next instant she sprang up on her knees in the bed. For one awful moment her eyes shone in the grey twilight with a radiant unearthly beauty, as they fastened their last look of fondness on her daughter's face. “Oh, my love! my angel!” she murmured, “how happy we shall be together now!” As she said the words, she

twined her arms round Rosamond's neck, and pressed her lips rapturously on the lips of her child.

The kiss lingered till her head sank forward gently on Rosamond's bosom — lingered, till the time of God's mercy came, and the weary heart rested at last.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Forty Thousand Pounds.

No popular saying is more commonly accepted than the maxim which asserts, that Time is the great consoler; and, probably, no popular saying more imperfectly expresses the truth. The work that we must do, the responsibilities that we must undertake, the example that we must set to others, — these are the great consolers, for these apply the first remedies to the malady of grief. Time possesses nothing but the negative virtue of helping it to wear itself out. Who that has observed at all, has not perceived that those among us who soonest recover from the shock of a great grief for the dead, are those who have most duties to perform towards the living? When the shadow of calamity rests on our houses, the question with us is, not how much time will suffice to bring back the sunshine to us again, but how much occupation have we got to force us forward into the place where the sunshine is waiting for us to come? Time may claim many victories, but not the victory over grief. The great consolation for the loss of the dead who are gone is to be found in the great necessity of thinking of the living who remain.

The history of Rosamond's daily life, now that the darkness of a heavy affliction had fallen on it, was in itself the sufficient illustration of this truth. When all

the strength even of her strong character had been prostrated by the unspeakably awful shock of her mother's sudden death, it was not the slow lapse of time that helped to raise her up again, but the necessity which would not wait for time — the necessity which made her remember what was due to the husband who sorrowed with her, to the child whose young life was linked to hers, and to the old man whose helpless grief found no support but in the comfort she could give, learnt no lesson of resignation but from the example she could set.

From the first, the responsibility of sustaining him had rested on her shoulders alone. Before the close of day had been counted out by the first hour of the night, she had been torn from the bedside by the necessity of meeting him at the door, and preparing him to know that he was entering the chamber of death. To guide the dreadful truth gradually and gently, till it stood face to face with him, to support him under the shock of recognising it, to help his mind to recover after the inevitable blow had struck it at last, these were the sacred duties which claimed all the devotion that Rosamond had to give, and which forbade her heart to dwell selfishly on its own grief. It was not the least of the trials she had now to face, to see the condition of vacant helplessness to which he was reduced under the weight of an affliction which he had no strength to bear.

He looked like a man whose faculties had been stunned past recovery. He would sit for hours with the musical-box by his side, patting it absently from time to time, and whispering to himself as he looked at it, but never attempting to set it playing. It was the one memorial left that reminded him of all the joys and sorrows,

the simple family interests and affections of his past life. When Rosamond first sat by his side and took his hand to comfort him, he looked backwards and forwards with forlorn eyes from her compassionate face to the musical-box, and vacantly repeated to himself the same words over and over again: "They are all gone — my brother Max, my wife, my little Joseph, my sister Agatha, and Sarah my niece! I and my little bit of box are left alone together in the world. Mozart can sing no more. He has sung to the last of them now!"

The second day there was no change in him. On the third, Rosamond placed the book of Hymns reverently on her mother's bosom, laid a lock of her own hair round it, and kissed the sad, peaceful face for the last time. The old man was with her at that silent leave-taking, and followed her away, when it was over. By the side of the coffin, and, afterwards, when she took him back with her to her husband, he was still sunk in the same apathy of grief which had overwhelmed him from the first. But when they began to speak of the removal of the remains the next day to Porthgenna churchyard, they noticed that his dim eyes brightened suddenly, and that his wandering attention followed every word they said. After a while, he rose from his chair, approached Rosamond, and looked anxiously in her face. "I think I could bear it better if you would let me go with her?" he said. "We two should have gone back to Cornwall together, if she had lived. Will you let us still go back together now that she has died?"

Rosamond gently remonstrated, and tried to make him see that it was best to leave the remains to be removed under the charge of her husband's servant, whose fidelity could be depended on, and whose position

made him the fittest person to be charged with cares and responsibilities which near relations were not capable of undertaking with sufficient composure. She told him that her husband intended to stop in London, to give her one day of rest and quiet which she absolutely needed, and that they then proposed to return to Cornwall in time to be at Porthgenna before the funeral took place; and she begged earnestly that he would not think of separating his lot from theirs at a time of trouble and trial, when they ought to be all three most closely united by the ties of mutual sympathy and mutual sorrow.

He listened silently and submissively while Rosamond was speaking, but he only repeated his simple petition when she had done. The one idea in his mind, now, was the idea of going back to Cornwall with all that was left on earth of his sister's child. Leonard and Rosamond both saw that it would be useless to oppose it, both felt that it would be cruelty to keep him with them, and kindness to let him go away. After privately charging the servant to spare him all trouble and difficulty, to humour him by acceding to any wishes that he might express, and to give him all possible protection and help without obtruding either officiously on his attention, they left him free to follow the one purpose of his heart which still connected him with the interests and events of the passing day. "I shall thank you better soon," he said at leave-taking, "for letting me go away out of this din of London with all that is left to me of Sarah, my niece. I will dry up my tears as well as I can, and try to have more courage when we meet again."

On the next day, when they were alone, Rosamond and her husband sought refuge from the oppression of the present, in speaking together of the future, and of the influence which the change in their fortunes ought to be allowed to exercise on their plans and projects for the time to come. After exhausting this topic, the conversation turned next on the subject of their friends, and on the necessity of communicating to some of the oldest of their associates the events which had followed the discovery in the Myrtle Room. The first name on their lips while they were considering this question, was the name of Dr. Chennery; and Rosamond, dreading the effect on her spirits of allowing her mind to remain unoccupied, volunteered to write to the vicar at once, referring briefly to what had happened since they had last communicated with him, and asking him to fulfil, that year, an engagement of long standing, which he had made with her husband and herself, to spend his autumn holiday with them at Porthgenna Tower. Rosamond's heart yearned for a sight of her old friend; and she knew him well enough to be assured that a hint at the affliction which had befallen her, and at the hard trial which she had undergone, would be more than enough to bring them together the moment Doctor Chennery could make his arrangements for leaving home.

The writing of this letter suggested recollections which called to mind another friend, whose intimacy with Leonard and Rosamond was of recent date, but whose connection with the earlier among the train of circumstances which had led to the discovery of the Secret, entitled him to a certain share in their confidence. This friend was Mr. Orridge, the doctor at West Winston, who had accidentally been the means of bringing Rosa-

mond's mother to her bedside. To him she now wrote acknowledging the promise which she had made, on leaving West Winston, to communicate the result of their search for the Myrtle Room; and informing him that it had terminated in the discovery of some very sad events, of a family nature, which were now numbered with the events of the past. More than this, it was not necessary to say to a friend who occupied such a position towards them as that held by Mr. Orridge.

Rosamond had written the address of this second letter, and was absently drawing lines on the blotting-paper with her pen, when she was startled by hearing a contention of angry voices in the passage outside. Almost before she had time to wonder what the noise meant, the door was violently pushed open, and a tall, shabbily dressed, elderly man, with a peevish, haggard face, and a ragged grey beard, stalked in, followed indignantly by the head waiter of the hotel.

"I have three times told this person," began the waiter, with a strong emphasis on the word "person," "that Mr. and Mrs. Frankland —"

"Were not at home," broke in the shabbily dressed man, finishing the sentence for the waiter. "Yes, you told me that; and I told you that the gift of speech was only used by mankind for the purpose of telling lies, and that consequently I didn't believe you. You have told a lie. Here are Mr. and Mrs. Frankland both at home. I come on business, and I mean to have five minutes' talk with them. I sit down unasked, and I announce my own name, Andrew Treverton."

With those words he sat down coolly in the nearest chair. Leonard's cheeks reddened with anger while he

was speaking, but Rosamond interposed before her husband could say a word.

"It is useless, love, to be angry with him," she whispered. "The quiet way is the best way with a man like that." She made a sign to the waiter which gave him permission to leave the room — then turned to Mr. Treverton. "You have forced your presence on us, sir," she said quietly, "at a time when a very sad affliction makes us quite unfit for contentions of any kind. We are willing to show more consideration for your age than you have shown for our grief. If you have anything to say to my husband, he is ready to control himself and to hear you quietly, for my sake."

"And I shall be short with him and with you, for my own sake," rejoined Mr. Treverton. "No woman has ever had the chance yet of sharpening her tongue long on me, or ever shall. I have come here to tell you three things. First, your lawyer has told me all about the discovery in the Myrtle Room, and how you made it. Secondly, I have got your money. Thirdly, I mean to keep it. What do you think of that?"

"I think you need not give yourself the trouble of remaining in the room any longer, if your only object in coming here is to tell us what we know already," said Leonard. "We know you have got the money; and we never doubted that you meant to keep it."

"You are quite sure of that, I suppose?" said Mr. Treverton. "Quite sure you have no lingering hope that any future twists and turns of the law will take the money out of my pocket again and put it back into yours? It is only fair to tell you that there is not the shadow of a chance of any such thing ever happening, or of my ever turning generous and rewarding you of my

own accord for the sacrifice you have made. I have been to Doctors' Commons, I have taken out a grant of administration, I have got the money legally, I have lodged it safe at my banker's, and I have never had one kind feeling in my heart since I was born. That was my brother's character of me, and he knew more of my disposition, of course, than anyone else. Once again, I tell you both, not a farthing of all that large fortune will ever return to either of you."

"And once again I tell you," said Leonard "that we have no desire to hear what we know already. It is a relief to my conscience and to my wife's to have resigned a fortune which we had no right to possess; and I speak for her as well as for myself when I tell you that your attempt to attach an interested motive to our renunciation of that money, is an insult to us both which you ought to have been ashamed to offer."

"That is your opinion, is it?" said Mr. Treverton. "You, who have lost the money, speak to me, who have got it, in that manner, do you? Pray, do you approve of your husband's treating a rich man who might make both your fortunes, in that way?" he inquired, addressing himself sharply to Rosamond.

"Most assuredly I approve of it," she answered. "I never agreed with him more heartily in my life than I agree with him now."

"Oh!" said Mr. Treverton. "Then it seems you care no more for the loss of the money than he does?"

"He has told you already," said Rosamond, "that it is as great a relief to my conscience as to his, to have given it up."

Mr. Treverton carefully placed a thick stick which he carried with him, upright between his knees, crossed

his hands on the top of it, rested his chin on them, and in that investigating position, stared steadily in Rosamond's face.

"I rather wish I had brought Shrowl here with me," he said to himself. "I should like him to have seen this. It staggers me, and I rather think it would have staggered him. Both these people," continued Mr. Treverton, looking perplexedly from Rosamond to Leonard, and from Leonard back again to Rosamond, "are to all outward appearance, human beings. They walk on their hind legs, they express ideas readily by uttering articulate sounds, they have the usual allowance of features, and in respect of weight, height, and size generally, they appear to me to be mere average human creatures of the common civilised sort. And yet, there they sit, taking the loss of a fortune of forty thousand pounds as easily as Croesus, King of Lydia, might have taken the loss of a halfpenny!"

He rose, put on his hat, tucked the thick stick under his arm, and advanced a few steps towards Rosamond.

"I am going now," he said. "Would you like to shake hands?"

Rosamond turned her back on him contemptuously.

Mr. Treverton chuckled with an air of supreme satisfaction.

Meanwhile, Leonard, who sat near the fireplace, and whose colour was rising angrily once more, had been feeling for the bell-rope, and had just succeeded in getting it into his hand, as Mr. Treverton approached the door.

"Don't ring, Lenny," said Rosamond. "He is going of his own accord."

Mr. Treverton stepped out into the passage, then glanced back into the room with an expression of puzzled

curiosity on his face, as if he was looking into a cage which contained two animals of a species that he had never heard of before. "I have seen some strange sights in my time," he said to himself. "I have had some queer experience of this trumpery little planet and of the creatures who inhabit it — but I never was staggered yet by any human phenomena, as I am staggered now by those two." He shut the door without saying another word, and Rosamond heard him chuckle to himself again as he walked away along the passage.

Ten minutes afterwards, the waiter brought up a sealed letter addressed to Mrs. Frankland. It had been written, he said, in the coffee-room of the hotel, by the "person" who had intruded himself into Mr. and Mrs. Frankland's presence. After giving it to the waiter to deliver, he had gone away in a hurry, swinging his thick stick complacently, and laughing to himself.

Rosamond opened the letter.

On one side of it was a crossed cheque, drawn in her name, for Forty Thousand pounds.

On the other side, were these lines of explanation: —

Take this. First, because you and your husband are the only two people I have ever met with who are not likely to be made rascals by being made rich. Secondly, because you have told the truth, when letting it out meant losing money, and keeping it in, saving a fortune. Thirdly, because you are not the child of the player-woman. Fourthly, because you can't help yourself — for I shall leave it to you at my death, if you won't have it now. Good-bye. Don't come and see me, don't write grateful letters to me, don't invite me into the country, don't praise my generosity, and, above all things, don't have anything more to do with Shrowl!

ANDREW TREVERTON.

The first thing Rosamond did, when she and her husband had a little recovered from their astonishment, was to disobey the injunction which forbade her to ad-

dress any grateful letters to Mr. Treverton. The messenger who was sent with her note to Bayswater, returned without an answer, and reported that he had received directions from an invisible man, with a gruff voice, to throw it over the garden-wall and to go away immediately after, unless he wanted to have his head broken.

Mr. Nixon, to whom Leonard immediately sent word of what had happened, volunteered to go to Bayswater the same evening, and make an attempt to see Mr. Treverton on Mr. and Mrs. Frankland's behalf. He found Timon of London more approachable than he had anticipated. The misanthrope was, for once in his life, in a good humour. This extraordinary change in him had been produced by the sense of satisfaction which he experienced in having just turned Shrowl out of his situation, on the ground that his master was not fit company for him after having committed such an act of folly as giving Mrs. Frankland back her forty thousand pounds. "I told him," said Mr. Treverton, chuckling over his recollection of the parting-scene between his servant and himself. "I told him that I could not possibly expect to merit his continued approval after what I had done, and that I could not think of detaining him in his place, under the circumstances. I begged him to view my conduct as leniently as he could, because the first cause that led to it was, after all, his copying the plan of Porthgenna, which guided Mrs. Frankland to the discovery in the Myrtle Room. I congratulated him on having got a reward of five pounds for being the means of restoring a fortune of forty thousand; and I bowed him out with a polite humility that half drove him mad. Shrowl and I have had a good many tussles in our time:

he was always even with me till to-day, and now I've thrown him on his back at last!"

Although Mr. Treverton was willing to talk of the defeat and dismissal of Shrowl as long as the lawyer would listen to him, he was perfectly unmanageable on the subject of Mrs. Frankland, when Mr. Nixon tried to turn the conversation to that topic. He would hear no messages — he would give no promise of any sort for the future. All that he could be prevailed on to say about himself and his own projects, was, that he intended to give up the house at Bayswater and to travel again for the purpose of studying human nature, in different countries, on a plan that he had not tried yet — the plan of endeavouring to find out the good that there might be in people as well as the bad. He said the idea had been suggested to his mind by his anxiety to ascertain whether Mr. and Mrs. Frankland were perfectly exceptional human beings or not. At present, he was disposed to think that they were, and that his travels were not likely to lead to anything at all remarkable in the shape of a satisfactory result. Mr. Nixon pleaded hard for something in the shape of a friendly message to take back, along with the news of his intended departure. The request produced nothing but a sardonic chuckle, followed by this parting speech, delivered to the lawyer at the garden-gate.

"Tell those two amazing people," said Timon of London, "that I may give up my travels in disgust when they least expect it; and that I may possibly come and look at them again, for the sake of getting one satisfactory sensation more out of the lamentable spectacle of humanity before I die."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Dawn of a New Life.

FOUR days afterwards, Rosamond and Leonard and Uncle Joseph met together in the cemetery of the church at Porthgenna.

The earth to which we all return, had closed over Her: the weary pilgrimage of Sarah Leeson had come to its quiet end at last. The miner's grave from which she had twice plucked in secret her few memorial fragments of grass, had given her the home, in death, which, in life, she had never known. The roar of the surf was stilled to a low murmur before it reached the place of her rest; and the wind that swept joyously over the open moor, paused a little when it met the old trees that watched over the graves, and wound onward softly through the myrtle hedge that held them all embraced alike in its circle of lustrous green.

Some hours had passed since the last words of the burial service had been read. The fresh turf was heaped already over the mound, and the old headstone with the miner's epitaph on it had been raised once more in its former place at the head of the grave. Rosamond was reading the inscription softly to her husband. Uncle Joseph had walked a little apart from them while she was thus engaged, and had knelt down by himself at the foot of the mound. He was fondly smoothing and patting the newly-laid turf, — as he had often smoothed Sarah's hair in the long past days of her youth, — as he had often patted her hand in the after-time, when her heart was weary and her hair was grey.

"Shall we add any new words to the old worn letters as they stand now?" said Rosamond, when she had read

the inscription to the end. "There is a blank space left on the stone. Shall we fill it, love, with the initials of my mother's name, and the date of her death? I feel something in my heart which seems to tell me to do that, and to do no more."

"So let it be, Rosamond," said her husband. "That short and simple inscription is the fittest and the best."

She looked away, as he gave that answer, to the foot of the grave, and left him for a moment to approach the old man. "Take my hand, Uncle Joseph," she said, and touched him gently on the shoulder. "Take my hand, and let us go back together to the house."

He rose as she spoke, and looked at her doubtfully. The musical-box, enclosed in its well-worn leather case, lay on the grave near the place where he had been kneeling. Rosamond took it up from the grass, and slung it in the old place at his side, which it always occupied when he was away from home. He sighed a little as he thanked her. "Mozart can sing no more," he said. "He has sung to the last of them now!"

"Don't say to the last, yet," said Rosamond, "don't say to the last, Uncle Joseph, while I am alive. Surely Mozart will sing to *me*, for my mother's sake?"

A smile — the first she had seen since the time of their grief — trembled faintly round his lips. "There is comfort in that," he said; "there is comfort for Uncle Joseph still, in hearing that."

"Take my hand," she repeated softly. "Come home with us now."

He looked down wistfully at the grave. "I will follow you," he said, "if you will go on before me to the gate?"

Rosamond took her husband's arm, and guided him

to the path that led out of the churchyard. As they passed from sight, Uncle Joseph knelt down once more at the foot of the grave, and pressed his lips on the fresh turf.

"Good-bye, my child," he whispered, and laid his cheek for a moment against the grass, before he rose again.

At the gate Rosamond was waiting for him. Her right hand was resting on her husband's arm; her left hand was held out for Uncle Joseph to take.

"How cool the breeze is!" said Leonard. "How pleasantly the sea sounds! Surely this is a fine summer day?"

"The brightest and loveliest of the year," said Rosamond. "The only clouds on the sky are clouds of shining white; the only shadows over the moor lie light as down on the heather. The sun glows clear in its glory of gold, and the sea beams back on it in its glory of blue. O, Lenny, it is such a different day from that day of dull oppression and misty heat when we found the letter in the Myrtle Room! Even the dark tower of our old house, yonder, gains a new beauty in the clear air, and seems to be arrayed in its brightest aspect to welcome us to the beginning of a new life. I will make it a happy life to you, and to Uncle Joseph, if I can — happy as the sunshine that we are all three walking in now. You shall never repent, love, if I can help it, that you have married a wife who has no claim of her own to the honours of a family name."

"I can never repent my marriage, love," said Leonard, "because I can never forget the lesson that my wife has taught me."

"What lesson, Lenny?"

"An old one, my dear, which some of us can never learn too often. The highest honours, Rosamond, are those which no accident can take away — the honours that are conferred by Love and Truth."

THE MURDER OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

THE third of January is the feast of Sainte G n vi ve, the patroness of Paris. On this day commences a festival of nine days' duration, called in Latin a Novena, and in French a Neuvaine. The chief scene of the festival is the quaint and little fantastical, and old church of Saint  tienne du Mont. This ancient church is an architectural curiosity. I could fancy an architect building the front of it as a sort of memorandum in miniature of all the different styles and fashions of ancient and medi eval architecture. I could fancy an architect exhibiting a model of it as a proof and specimen of his ability to gratify every form and fantasy of architectural caprice. I am sure a professor might deliver a course of lectures upon architecture without any other illustrations than a daguerreotype of the front of the church of Saint  tienne du Mont. You may observe, sticking up from the roof towards the left of the queerest old church front, the queerest little square tower you can imagine. This contains a clock-dial, surmounted by a common lead-covered belfry.

The tomb of Sainte G n vi ve is in this little church

of Saint Etienne du Mont. The shrine of the saint is very much gilded, and the tomb and chapel look very ancient. There are many large and small pictures upon the walls, and the tomb is covered with a blaze of little tapers. Pilgrims crowd from all the parishes and from all the environs of Paris, to this shrine, from morning to evening, every day, kneeling in prayer, counting their beads, and lighting little tapers. During the nine days, the pillars and interior of the church are showily hung with blue and white draperies.

Ever since the coup-d'état enabled President Bonaparte to restore the Panthéon to the clergy as the church of Sainte G  n  vi  ve, the chief festival of Paris has been celebrated with continually increasing pomp and splendour. The little church of Saint   tienne is at the corner of the grand church of Sainte G  n  vi  ve, and the end of a broad paved street or Place which separates the church from the Library of Sainte G  n  vi  ve. This magnificent temple is the only church in Paris comparable to Saint Paul's Cathedral, in London. Both the small old, and the large new church, are used in the ceremonies of the annual Parisian festival.

On Saturday, the third of January eighteen hundred and fifty-seven, the Archbishop of Paris presided over the opening ceremonials of the Neuvaine. Vespers had been chanted, and the sermon of the Abb   Lacarri  re was over. The procession of the ladies of Sainte G  n  vi  ve was walking round the church. The canons in long white cloaks with blue satin facings preceded the Archbishop, the most conspicuous form in the procession, with his golden mitre gleaming in the light upon his head, and with his tall gilded crozier in his hand, while a priest upon each side of him supported his heavy pon-

tifical robes. He scattered his benedictions before him. The procession was accomplishing the second turn round the church; the Archbishop having approached the bottom of the nave, was in the act of blessing the children, when a young man in a frock-coat sprung up, his eyes darting fury, and, with a long poignard-knife in his right hand. A lady seized the knife with her left hand, but let go on feeling it cut. The young man lifted up the cape of the Archbishop, and instantaneously plunged the knife deep into his heart, crying aloud, — “Down with the Goddesses!”

“Unhappy man!” ejaculated the prelate, letting fall his crozier and falling backwards, while his black eyes started as if out of their sockets. He was dead in a moment. The Abbé Surat caught the body in his arms, and it was carried into the sacristy, where it received a hasty absolution. At the instant of the blow a loud shriek from an unknown voice shook the dome of the church.

Meanwhile stupor seized the crowded congregation; who were chiefly women. The Curé of Saint Étienne du Mont, imagining that the Archbishop had fainted from fatigue or from a blow, endeavoured to calm their consternation. The devotions proceeded for a few minutes until a person coming out of the sacristy said, “Monseigneur is dead.” Terror seized the congregation. A priest was seen to take up and to turn the holy sacrament.

A sergent de ville arrested the assassin upon the spot. He did not make the slightest attempt to escape, and delivered up his formidable weapon. When he was taken out of the church, and the mob knew what he had done, some of them proposed to take him back to

the blood-stained spot, and tear him to pieces. Echarper, the verb they use, means literally, to tear into pieces as rags are torn into lint.

The newspapers of the Sabbath morning spread the news all over Paris, of the assassination of the Archbishop. I happened on this particular Sunday to have offered to take an acquaintance over the principal churches of the French metropolis. I shall never forget their mournful aspect. The music was silent in their orchestras, and the lights were few and dim upon their altars. Nothing but low masses were performed, and the clergy chanted the psalms of penitence. The audience were, however, unusually numerous, and when the preachers mounted the pulpits the flocks seemed to cower together under them, as if seeking refuge from the gloom and terror of a thunder-storm. The church of Saint Étienne du Mont was shut, and black cloth was hanging before the principal porch and the two side-doors.

On the black hangings before the porch there was a large white placard, upon which was written the following legend:

Monseigneur the Archbishop of Paris, having been struck dead by a criminal hand, in the Church of Saint Étienne du Mont, yesterday, at five o'clock in the evening, the church will remain interdicted until the ceremony of expiation, which will be announced hereafter.

Signed,

ED. DE BORIES, Curé.

As I mingled in the crowd who were reading the placard, I could not avoid hearing their discussions upon the event. A well-dressed citizen (bourgeois), about thirty years of age, and whose intelligent face and

neatly-clipped beard apparently announced a republican, exclaimed:

"We are then in the middle ages!"

A burgess about sixty, with a keen mask of irony serving him as a countenance, and whom I suspected of being a Voltairian, exclaimed sarcastically:

"And it was by an ecclesiastic!"

A lady advanced in life, and dissatisfied with the course taken by the current of sentiment, objected:

"But several times suspended."

To this objection, the Voltairian rejoined, with a slight sneer of triumph:

"*He* had therefore bad antecedents."

As the old lady held down her discomfited head, a young workman in a blue blouse said, as plainly as a sardonic grin could speak through the villanous countenance it lighted up, "Our priests are like ourselves." Subsequently I heard a burgess say to a physician, "That the priests kill each other: — What is that to us? *He* stabbed him to show how well they had brought him up to be without malignity."

CHAPTER II.

WHEN taken to the police office of the quarter, the assassin, in reply to the questions of the authorities, said that his name was Verger, that he was born at Neuilly, that he was a priest of the diocese of Meaux, that he had been suspended for preaching against the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, that he had not any personal ill-will to Archbishop Sibour, and that he stabbed the prelate in the church to protest once more, publicly, solemnly, and finally, against an impious idolatry, crying,

"A bas les Déesses." He had given but one stab, knowing well he had pierced the heart. When the magistrate pointed to him the enormity of his crime, he shed tears, and said, "Yes, it is frightful." The magistrates recognised in him a man of superior intelligence and instruction. He is good-looking, with a fine forehead, fine eyes, and an expressive countenance. Remarkably calm and tranquil in his manner, his self-possession never forsook him; only he exclaimed several times, "No goddesses! no goddesses!" While they were reading his deposition over to him, he criticised the report, and obliged the reporter to correct some phrases, and use his own exact and clear expressions. On entering his cell in the prison, he asked for something to eat, saying he had not eaten anything since morning. The last thing he asked for was an Evangile, or Four Gospels, observing, "I shall have much need of it this night."

Louis-Jean Verger was born upon the twentieth of August, eighteen hundred and twenty-six, at Neuilly-sur-Seine. At his first school he was remarkable for his studious and pious disposition. When at the age of twelve he made his first communion at Neuilly, the Curé Legrand took particular notice of him, and his apparent piety obtained him the protection of the Marchioness de Rochefort, called the Sister Milanie, the superior of the daughters of Saint Vincent de Paul. Sister Milanie took upon herself the expenses of his education for the priesthood, and he was received in the little seminary of Saint Nicholas de Chardonnet, in the Rue Saint Victor, which was then directed by the Abbé Dupanloup, the present Bishop of Orleans. The high classical attainments of this bishop obtained him recently the rare honour of admission into the Academy of Letters; and,

as I remember, he discoursed eloquently, on the delight he had derived from the study of the verses of Virgil.

In eighteen hundred and forty-two, when he was sixteen years of age, Verger went from the seminary of Saint Nicholas in the Rue Saint Victor, to a seminary connected with it at Gentilly. He was there dux or leader of the school, obtaining the first prize for good conduct, and the first prize for religious instruction. His bright promise was, however, obscured by a little cloud. Sister Milanie gave him sixty francs to buy books of theology and piety, but soon afterwards his devout protectress was shocked at learning that, among the books he had bought, were copies of Racine and Molière. Some persons deemed this fault a theft, and it was described as such in the journals, when he had brought down upon himself the public indignation. On leaving school, a priest received him into his house as his secretary; and he entered into holy orders, becoming successively a deacon and a priest. He was soon afterwards sent to serve the parish of Guercheville.

The police found among his papers a thick copybook entitled, "Notes sur l'Abbé Verger." In these notes he complains of his first parishioners refusing to pay him his dues, saying, "These fellows would willingly have paid me with cudgellings." From Guercheville he passed to Jouarre, and thence rapidly to Bailly-Canois. Le Droit says he was obliged to decamp by a furtive removal from this curacy to escape the seizure of his goods on the loss of a lawsuit with a waggoner. "In consequence of this affair, and after useless efforts to obtain admission among the clergy of Paris, tired of struggling, he went to London, and was received into the number of the French

clergy, assisting Bishop Wiseman in the work of the Catholic propaganda."

Returning from England, he was kindly received by the Abbé Legrand, the curé at Neuilly, who had become the curé of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois. The English propaganda being the grand affair of the Roman Catholic Church, Monsieur l'Abbé Verger rose to the dignity of cross-bearer in the chapel of the Tuileries. His position inspired him with ambitious dreams. The handsome young priest who leads the processions bearing aloft the cross, might indeed reasonably hope, in due course of time, to close the processions as an aged bishop, carrying the crozier.

Subservience, the feelers and feet needful for all ambitious locomotion, was, however — as the purchase of Racine and Molière early indicated — wanting in this young priest. He wrote, printed and tried to publish, pamphlets, which were seized and condemned, against the celibacy of the clergy. The curé of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois accused him of calumniating his brethren. Verger lost his place. He fell into debt; and, in a letter to a tradesman from whom he had received some bedding on credit, he wrote, "The difficulties created for me by the curé of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois having left me without resources, the expenses of legal proceedings would fall upon my creditor; nevertheless, if you will take my mattress, come — I shall not oppose you." He wearied the Archbishop and clergy with solicitations for employment; but without effect. And one day he appeared upon the steps of the splendid church of the Madeleine — which is always frequented by English visitors — in the attitude of a beggar, with a paper upon his breast bearing this inscription: "Have pity upon me;

"I am a suspended priest, and I am dying of hunger." An English lady who relieved him, a neighbour of mine, was struck with his appearance. The commissary of police, before whom he was brought for the offence, perceived in him a superior kind of man.

Archbishop Sibour disembarrassed himself of the Abbé Verger by giving him a recommendation to the Bishop of Meaux. The beggar from the steps of the Madeleine was appointed curé of the parish of Seris; but, he could not be kept out of trouble. One of his parishioners, named Lamy, was convicted of poisoning his wife; and Verger published a pamphlet in which he attacked the witnesses, the jurymen, and the judges. It is but just to record the declaration of *Le Droit*, the legal journal, that nothing has been discovered, prior to the murder, which throws a stain upon his morals. Verger held the most exalted ideas of theocracy and clerical power, maintaining the right of the clergy to exemption from the judgments of the civil and criminal tribunals.

The Abbé Verger had lost his position of cross-bearer for denouncing the celibacy of the clergy: he now forfeited his country parish by attacking in his pulpit the newly promulgated dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Archbishop Sibour had himself opposed it until it was voted; when he submitted to it. Verger was dismissed by the Bishop of Meaux on the twenty-first of last December. He arrived in Paris on Christmas Eve. Ten days of his time in the metropolis remains to be accounted for. It has been said he spent them in reading in the public libraries. He bought the knife in the Rue Dauphine on the evening of the second of January. Dark rumours, however, are blown in whispers all over Paris, which fill with fearful occupations and extraordinary

associates the ten days which Verger spent in the French capital from the Eve of Christmas to the Feast of Sainte G  n  vi  ve. When all free discussion in a country is suppressed, what is lost to reason and truth is given to passion and imagination. The capital of Napoleon the Third is a whispering chamber of wild conjectures. Is the assassin mad? Was he driven by hunger? Is he alone in it? Who has put him up to it? Who are his associates? Is he an agent of the Jesuits? Who gains by it? Was not the ultramontane party furious against the Archbishop? Is not great power given to the Emperor by it? Will the Abb   Bonaparte be the new Archbishop? Was not the Archbishop named by Cavaignac an obstacle to the visit of the Pope to bestow the crown? Will the Pope come now? Have not the Univers party gained already by the suppression of the exposures of the Abb   Cognat?

Where everything is *ex parte*, nothing is credible; and much may be said in support of the view that Louis-Jean Verger is an assassin of the species of Carl Ludwig Sand and Charlotte Corday. To obtain his opportunity, he had not to surmount the obstacles which stood in the way of the assassins of Kotzebue and Marat. His cool sagacity does not equal the cold premeditation which was displayed by a young girl. The thing which showed most presence of mind — the pushing aside of the cape — could scarcely have required the suggestion of third parties. Verger, in twelve days after his dismissal from his parish, and while able to buy an expensive knife, could scarcely have been suffering from actual want. No doubt a paper is said to have been found upon him in which he said, "they do not allow a priest to die of want." No doubt he had known want; and hunger and

the fear of hunger are conditions singularly favourable to mental over-excitement — the state which the French call exaltation.

Many elements of homicidal exaltation fermented in this hot brain. Disappointed ambition, morbid vanity, and pagan revenge, might, in a man of education, assume the disguise of theological fanaticism, and hide their demon aspects from the half conscious criminal himself, in the robes and renown of an angel of light. He watched for his opportunity from the morning until the evening. Ruined and envious, the disappointed priest looking at the successful priest, might nurse with evil joy the thought that he could still lay low the man of the mitre and crozier. Fanatically excited against the goddess, and indignant at the ruin brought upon him by his advocacy of reforms, the enthusiast might say, in his perverted heart, "I shall make them talk of me; I have been enslaved, and I shall be free. I have been silenced in my pulpit, but I shall, with one blow, shiver the whole golden fabric of idolatry."

CHAPTER III.

Marie-Dominique-Auguste Sibour was born at Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, in the diocese of Valence, on the fourth of April, seventeen hundred and ninety-two. He was ordained a priest in eighteen hundred and fifteen. For several years he fulfilled the functions of a vicar of Saint Sulpice; and was subsequently a canon of Nîmes. When he was forty-eight years of age, he was consecrated Bishop of Digne, in eighteen hundred and forty. His talents as a writer, orator, and administrator, and a certain reputation for liberality, pointed him out to the

choice of the Republican Dictator of June, eighteen hundred and forty-eight, as the suitable successor of Archbishop Affre in the archiepiscopal throne of Paris.

General Cavaignac gave to Bishop Sibour the mitre he had picked up on the barricades. The mitre came by assassination, and went by assassination. Archbishop Affre was shot by a workman upon the twenty-fourth of June, eighteen hundred and forty-eight; and Archbishop Sibour was stabbed by a priest upon the third of January, eighteen hundred and fifty-seven; and both died in full pontificals — the one upon a barricade, speaking words of peace in a furious insurrection; the other in a church, while giving his benediction to children. There is an old man-servant in the archiepiscopal palace, whose arms have held the corpses of both his murdered masters.

I may mention a few traits of Archbishop Sibour come under my observation, which seemed to me worthy of note. During the Republic there were many associations of workmen of different kinds, who clubbed together their capital, and conducted their affairs by votes, dispensing altogether with masters, and sharing mutually their profits. Of course these associations were very powerful during the conflicts of the revolution. As far as I could judge, the associations usually consisted of a more sober and intelligent kind of workmen than the generality of Parisian workfolks. They were very different indeed from the National workshops. M. Léon Faucher, the Minister of the Interior, and Archbishop Sibour, were the most notable of the personages who delivered speeches to them. Natural as a reaction against tyrannies of Parisian employers, and interesting as social experiments, the associations were, however, formed by persons ignorant of the principles of political economy.

The Archbishop addressing an audience of joiners, ebony workers, and carpet weavers, in November, eighteen hundred and fifty-one, said:

"Christ had redeemed the people from slavery, more recently a revolution had emancipated the serfs; and the work you are accomplishing is the redemption of the hirelings." The following is the peroration of a speech of the Archbishop in a workshop of chair-makers:

"In other shops I have seen many workmen and one master — here there are ninety masters."

Archbishop Sibour was sometimes called the Red Archbishop. On the morning of the second of December, eighteen hundred and fifty-one, rumour added the name of the liberal Archbishop to the list of the republican members and generals arrested in their beds. This explained the silence of the belfries on an occasion when the republicans expected them to sound the tocsin.

I saw him in the Champ de Mars, blessing the imperial flags, upon the tenth of May, eighteen hundred and fifty-two, on the occasion which was called the Feast of Eagles. The immense square space from the École Militaire to the Seine, called the Champ de Mars, seemed one vast harvest field of soldiery, whose varied costumes were set off by two sides or edgings of green foliage. The procession of the Archbishop and eight hundred of his clergy dressed in white made a beautiful effect when their long lines were seen winding their way among the military. They slowly ascended the steps of a lofty chapel to officiate at an altar, the lighted tapers of which were seen feebly glimmering in the brilliant sunlight. The ensigns or standard-bearers walked in procession from the tribune of the President to the chapel of the Archbishop. When they had ascended, the gilded eagles

and tricolor banners were conspicuous above the heads of the clergy. Over every sanctified flag the Archbishop uttered a remarkable Latin prayer:

Accipite vexilla cœlesti benedictione sanctificata, sintque inimicis populi Christiani terribilia, et det vobis Dominus gratiam, ut, ad ipsius nomen et honorem, cum illo hostium cuneos potenter penetretis incolumes et securi.

Receive these standards sanctified by the blessing of Heaven. May they be the terror of the enemies of the Christian people, and may God, in honour of his name and his glory, give you grace to pierce, safe and sound, into the midst of the battalions of the enemy.

After pronouncing the prayer, the Archbishop gave the kiss of peace to each ensign, saying *Pax tibi*, Peace to thee! and the ensign, after kissing the pontifical ring, rose from his knees and walked to his place in the ranks, where the flag was welcomed with loud cheering. When the Host was elevated every man in the whole army of sixty thousand soldiers knelt on one knee. During the defile the meadow of the god of war was covered with waving crops of human life, offering themselves successively to the service of the deity. Successively, long fields of gleaming steel, of blazing brass, and of tricolor-decked lances, galloped past upon horseback. Long fields of men in light blue, in dark green with white breasts, with belted breasts, with red breasts, ran swiftly past, offering themselves to the god; last of all, galloped the terrible masses of artillerymen with their offerings of cannon. The god of battles, we know now, accepted the sacrifices offered to his altar. I shall not venture to guess at present how many of the animated forms I then saw upon the Meadow of Mars are to-day mere bones rotting in oriental earth. Death had his firstfruits even there and then. I saw a chandelier fall, and I witnessed a commotion among the priests. Subsequently I was

informed by the newspapers that the chandelier had killed one of the clergy of Paris.

In the spring of eighteen hundred and fifty-three, the Archbishop interdicted the Abbé Lacordaire for preaching a sermon which was generally construed to be an attack on the Emperor. The eloquent Dominican praised several virtues, such as truthfulness and integrity, and everybody sent his phrases, allusions, and quotations away from themselves to the address of the Tuileries. The Archbishop himself heard the discourse in the church of Saint Roch. He found the preacher had been guilty of simplicity and imprudence in using awkward quotations; and, as he could never permit the pulpit to be turned into a tribune, he interdicted the first of French pulpit orators from preaching for ever after, within ten miles of the capital.

Archbishop Sibour fought bravely a sore fight against the *Univers* newspaper. This singular journal preaches in the last half of the nineteenth century what Louis the Fourteenth practised in the last half of the seventeenth century. It says that human reason is good for nought; that heresy is worse than crime; that Luther was worse than the worst of criminals; and that it is glorious to destroy the enemies of the Vicar of Christ. M. Montalembert says some of its writers have denied to him the right of private individuals to use the word justice. The journal is little read, and liberal Roman Catholics say, "Rather than be Papists like the *Univers* we would become Protestants."

Archbishop Sibour forbade the reading of the *Univers* in his diocese. But the editor appealed to Rome. The Parisians, who take singularly little interest in ecclesiastical squabbles, felt considerable curiosity to know whether

the Pope would decide in favour of the editor or of the Archbishop. The Holy Father decided in favour of the editor. The Latin secretary of the Pope published an eulogium upon the *Univers* newspaper. The man with the crozier had to knuckle under to the man with the pen, and the Archbishop was compelled to annul his prohibition.

The blow dealt by the papal hand to the authority of the Archbishop was subsequently mollified a little by an allocution of the oracle at Rome good enough to admit human reason to be good for something. The Pope said, faith and reason are both gifts of God; and human reason is competent to discover the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and human liberty. This document produced generally in intelligent circles a comment to this effect. Why, if human reason can discover such grand truths, it surely can judge the authority of the church and the allocutions of the Pope?

The Parisians with one voice proclaim the generosity of Archbishop Sibour to the poor. The *Univers* seemed to insinuate that the Abbé Verger had been an exception, by putting into his mouth erroneously the words, "They do not allow a priest to die of want." But, I have not heard two opinions in Paris respecting the amiability and charity of the prelate. The salary of the Archbishop of Paris is sixteen hundred pounds a-year, with a palace and carriage. It would appear from his will that he had very little to leave to his family. He left to his niece a thousand francs a-year, or an annuity of forty pounds. His bequests for masses and to the poor do not amount together to five hundred pounds. I have heard angry voices which denounced the priesthood

generally with hatred and scorn, become soft and reverential when speaking of him as a good man.

There was indeed something better than curiosity observable in the vast crowds who went to see the exhibition of his dead body. This ceremony of the middle ages was got up in the mediæval way. The silent crowds went two and two through three square and lofty rooms which were hung with black. The coat of arms of the deceased with the motto "*Major autem horum est charitas,*" was displayed in each of the rooms. In the fourth room lay the body upon a four-post bed of state, the posts and top of which looked silvery. Altars, upon which candles burned, were placed upon each side of the room, and each altar was served by six priests. The corpse wore his full pontifical robes; and being much raised up I could see distinctly that the large black eyes were wide open, and wore the look of surprise and horror, characteristic of sudden death by paralysis of the heart. The lower jaw, always large, had swelled enormously. A priest was constantly occupied in approaching to the body, the newspapers say with objects handed to him by the crowd, consisting chiefly of medals and rosaries, but sometimes swords and caps.

The interment on Saturday, the tenth of January, was a strange and picturesque funereal show. At eight o'clock all the bells in the belfries began ringing. No doubt the effect of the military, civil and ecclesiastical costumes succeeding each other in the procession along the quays, was very striking, and well heightened by the funeral marches played by the bands. My point of view was a seat in the centre aisle of the cathedral of *Nôtre Dame*. The wide and lofty porches were open, and I could see the numerous troops in the sunlight of

the Place outside. Far away, at the other end of the vast church and long aisle, hung with black, ermine, and silver, could be discerned through the religious gloom, the lofty altar and officiating bishops in their silver mitres. The violet-covered coffin with the gold mitre, the missal, the ring, and the crozier were borne between two lines of infantry, slowly along the aisle to the catafalque. The music was performed in faux bourdon, an imitation of bells. But the spectacle was more military than ecclesiastical; the sacred hymns, the organ peals, and all the musical effects, being destroyed by the words of command, the screams of bugles, the roll of drums, and the salvoes of artillery. At three o'clock, the Chapter sung the vespers of the dead, and soon afterwards the body was lowered into the vault of the Archbishops of Paris.

The moral effects were as much destroyed as the musical. I saw many pensive faces, and I saw some women in tears. But the large majority of the audience formed the most irreverent crowd I have ever seen in a place of worship. Idle curiosity, indifferent levity, and gross ill-breeding, made the devotions of the worshippers impossible. I saw several scuffles, and on two occasions I heard the cry — "On se bat!" — "they are fighting!" Yet surely there has rarely been an affair more fitted to make the light serious, and the serious grave. Surely it is sad to witness a *mélange* of Christianity and crime — assassination and benediction — a good man laid low by a fanatic — the chief of a church murdered by a priest of the altar — the poignard in the hands that had carried the cross. Surely all this is mournful and humiliating for the moral pride of the nineteenth century. Louis-Jean Verger may have carried the cross, but he

never could have truly seen it, and after all, this monster of perversion is a man fashioned in all respects as we are. Silence and not music, sackcloth and not gilt costumes, solitary meditation and not military pomps, seem most becoming when the cross has been so desecrated.

On the Monday, the church of Saint Etienne du Mont was reconciled by an expiatory sacrifice. A procession of clergy led by a cross-bearer, and closed by a bishop, marched slowly up to the porches and doors of the church, which were hung with black. There was no admission. The Holy Sacrament, which had been turned away from the scene of crime, would not enter into the desecrated church. The procession made the tour round the church, presenting the cross at each door; and when the Holy Sacrament returned to the principal door, a workman mounted upon a ladder, and let down the black cloth, and the whole procession entered the re-consecrated edifice. The altars were immediately decorated with their ornaments. Every morning and every evening, the clergy of Saint Etienne du Mont are to be seen at present kneeling around the spot where the martyr was immolated, chanting the Miserere and the Parce, Domine.

When the black cloth fell, a workman at my side, said:

"Now Sainte G n v  ve can perform her miracles."

"Miracles!" I exclaimed, "What miracles?"

"Don't you know?"

"No. I am a foreigner and a Protestant."

"Well; all the sick who lie in sheets, or wear rings, or use handkerchiefs which have touched the box con-

taining the bones of Sainte G n vi ve, are cured of their maladies in nine days."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. Faith does everything."

The medal struck in commemoration of the occasion is a very rude specimen of numismatic art. On one side, is a figure of an archbishop with the words „M. Dom. Auguste Sibour, Archev que de Paris;" and on the other side is the inscription, "Frapp  mortellement le 3 Janvier, 1857, dans l' glise de St. Etienne du Mont, f te patronale de Ste. G n vi ve. Maledicimur et Benedicimus (Saint Paul aux Corinth. iv. 12)."

When the bells were ringing for the funeral of the prelate, the prisoner was entering the Conciergerie, there to await his trial.

CHAPTER IV.

SELDOM has a trial excited stronger passions in Paris than the trial of the Abb  Verger. I despair of conveying to my readers an adequate conception of the angry elements in the storm which raged in the Court of Assizes on Saturday, the seventeenth of January. The immense crowds around the court were but feeble signs of the moral conflicts agitating all the households of the French metropolis.

The Verger affair is one of a series. This scandal is the most picturesque and terrible of a foul series of ecclesiastical scandals. Ever since eighteen hundred and fifty-three there have been midnight masses in Paris which were deemed too scandalous to be permitted in the time of Louis Philippe and the Republic. As far as possible the Si cle newspaper — in continual war with

the Univers — has confirmed indirectly the worst rumours in circulation respecting the morals of the clergy. At the end of autumn thirty-five persons, most of them said to be priests, it was whispered, had been arrested at the Ternes. Subsequently the tribunals condemned several persons, including Hervé the musical composer and Alexis Dupont the chief singer at the sacred festivals. On New Year's Eve, an unknown man rung at the door of the apartment occupied at Courbevoie by a Mademoiselle Sierawski and her mother. The man asked the young woman to read a letter addressed to her. While she was reading it, he stabbed her several times, and left her for dead. Rumour said the assassination was attempted because she had made a declaration to the commissary of police against the morals of the clergy.

The appearance of Verger prepossessed the audience in his favour. He was a slender young man of middle height. He was simply dressed in black, with a merino stock, without a shirt collar; and the blackness of his whole costume set off and made striking the pale whiteness of his complexion. His paleness was the pallor of studious youth. His appearance was what the French call distinguished. His regular oval face and his high forehead were covered with dark brown hair, parted on the left side. His eyes were those expressive blue eyes which are black or sparkling according to the emotions which excite them. His voice was harmonious, and rich in various tones.

Verger spoke in the dock an autobiography, which I shall extract from a comparison of all the fullest newspaper reports, and by translating as literally and as

truly as I can his exact words, and interposing nothing but necessary explanations.

Vergier says: "I did not gain the favour of Sister Milanie by my piety, but by my prettiness as a boy — *par ma gentillesse*."

She distributed the benefactions of the Queen Amelie.

"I demand that the notes on my conduct may be shown, and that my professors at the seminary may be heard, in order to prove the falsehood of the witness who says they did not show me any sympathy."

The result of his notes, as published in the *Droit*, prove he had only one superior in the seminary. He had no eccentricities. He was very timid, had an amiable air, and his polite manners prepossessed people in his favour. The sixty francs from the Sister Milanie were given.

"Given! do you hear? To buy books, and I bought them. I was, in fact, the protégé of Madame de Rochefort, the superior of the sisters of Neuilly. In a brilliant lecture which he delivered to us, M. Dupanloup, who was then combating the university, said, 'Mes enfans, you must get classical books in order to maintain the struggle in the examinations for the bachelor's degree.' I believed it was necessary to buy as many books as possible. I asked for sixty francs from Madame de Rochefort, who gave them to me, that is abandoned them to my profit. My father bought the books with me, he bought not new but second-hand books. He saved fifteen francs, and, as I must avow everything, he bought me a pair of pantalons and an umbrella, because he is poor, very poor, is my father. I did not take these books to the seminary, because I knew that M. Millaut would not put the seminary stamp upon them. Molière was not

bought; my father and I bought Racine and Pascal, which are forbidden by the Inquisition."

M. Millaut says, "I also heard a talk of Molière."

Verger: "No, Pascal."

M. Millaut blamed him for having bought the history of France by Anquetil, in twenty-two volumes, said it was very bad to dispose of the money of the poor in buying books of amusement. M. Dupanloup said, "Now we have the opportunity we waited for, we must send him to his family." On the registers of the seminary the transaction was mentioned as a seeming impropriety in money matters. Verger insists in saying —

"I was free to do with the money whatever I pleased."

The President says: "You are not accused of theft, only of an impropriety."

Verger: "The word is in the act of accusation."

This document, indeed, which, far from confining itself to the murder of the Archbishop, rakes up the whole life of Verger, does, in fact, say: "He was sent away from the seminary for a fault which compromised his probity" — that is for dishonesty.

Verger left the seminary in eighteen hundred and forty-four, when eighteen years of age. M. Dupanloup had recorded that "he was not fitted for the ecclesiastical state." In eighteen hundred and forty-six, however, he entered into the grand seminary of Meaux, recommended by an ecclesiastic as "an excellent young man." The curé of his native parish gave him, in eighteen hundred and forty-seven, according to the rules of the grand seminary, a most flattering testimonial. His protectors gave him letters full of eulogy in eighteen hundred and forty-eight and forty-nine, which justified the best hopes.

He was made a professor in the little seminary, and received the tonsure in eighteen hundred and forty-eight; he received the subdeaconate and deaconate in eighteen hundred and forty-nine, and although too young, the priesthood in eighteen hundred and fifty with a dispensation in regard to the required age. The curé of Neuilly begged the superior of the grand seminary, on the seventeenth of May, eighteen hundred and fifty, to send him, if not contrary to the rules, as soon as possible after his ordination, the good Verger — le bon Verger — whom he regarded as one of his children, to whom he had given the first communion, and whom he would be happy to assist in his first mass. The directors of the little seminary, M. Sibon and M. Millaut, said also:

“Since his superiors have made him a priest, after an examination, he is no doubt improved, let us go to his first mass and make an amende honorable for the judgment we have passed upon him.”

Verger: “An amende honorable! You hear it, gentlemen of the jury?”

On his return from England in eighteen hundred and fifty-two, Sister Milanie, at three different times, requested the curé of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois to receive him as one of his assistants. M. Sibour, the vicaire-général, requested, and the Archbishop consented, to his reception into the presbytre or manse. Legrand made himself his sole creditor by lending him eight hundred francs to pay his debts.

L'Abbé Legrand says: “He remained two years and seven months as a priest, employed in several secondary capacities.”

Verger: “At the Tuileries!”

Legrand: “In effect, I recommended him as habitual

priest at the Tuileries. He performed there certain ceremonies."

Verger: "All."

Legrand: "During two years the accused fulfilled his functions in a satisfactory manner. I only found him taciturn. I hoped to succeed in dominating his character in the end. Circumstances which took place in the end of July, eighteen hundred and fifty-five, having obliged me to address to him some reproaches, they were not well received."

Verger: "Pardon! You have got my letter — read it. I threw myself upon my knees before him upon the earth. I almost adored him."

The President: "Wait; we shall read your letters by and by."

Legrand: "You allude to another fault of which I shall not speak, because a fault forgiven is a fault forgotten. It was about something else. I was obliged to reduce the exercise of his ministry."

Verger: "My letters, gentlemen of the jury — the letters written and signed by me; read these letters!"

The President: "Will you not hold your tongue?"

Verger: "The truth will not be silent."

Legrand: "When obliged to give an account to the vicaire-général of Verger's difficult temper, I told him I wished the accused to retain his ecclesiastical position at the Tuileries, of which he was very tenacious."

Verger: "Oh! Yes."

Legrand: "Only I did not think it my duty to solicit the continuation of confessional powers, because it added nothing to his situation, and a great deal to my responsibility. He appeared to submit, and, on the sixth of August, I received a letter which you can read. On the

eighth the accused sent me another letter, respectful and calm, in which he told me he intended to quit the manse. I begged him not to take a step which would compromise his future."

Verger: "Let the letter be read. It was after that letter that he tried to have me locked up as a madman; he does not say that."

The President: "Can't you wait? You do not know what the witness is going to say."

Legrand: "The next day he left, and took away his furniture. The same day an autographed circular was distributed all over the parish by the Abbé Verger, full of accusations to which I do not think it my duty to answer."

Verger: "That is never answered."

The President: "Accused, you demand that the letters may be read?"

Verger: "Yes, M. le Président."

The President commences to read.

Verger, interrupting him: "Ah! it is not that; those are not the circulars. Gentlemen of the jury, you are my judges — you answer for me before God, before society and before my father; have the circulars read!"

The President continued reading the letters, but not in the order of their dates.

Verger: "You are not doing your duty!"

The President: "What is my duty?"

Verger: "To read everything."

The President continues to read.

Verger: "I ask —"

The President: "Sit down."

Verger: "Gentlemen of the jury, protest for me."

The President: "Hold your tongue."

The President goes on reading the letters.

Verger exclaims all the while, "Gentlemen of the jury, don't let him leave out the circulars; demand the circulars. Oh! Justice, the wretches; Justice is greater than the magistrate!"

Murmurs beginning to make themselves heard in the audience, the President silences them, and says:

"Here are the circulars asked for by the accused. We shall read them."

Verger bounding upon his seat: "Ah, yes, listen listen! Gentlemen of the jury, listen well!"

The following is the circular:

Monsieur, — I have the honour of submitting the following letter, which I have addressed to M. the Curé of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois:

"Monsieur le Curé, — Ever since I have been one of the priests of your parish I have often had occasion to complain of your conduct towards me:

* * * * *

I prefer to isolate myself and to abstain from every sacred function.

"I have the grief to be, M. le Curé, one of your unfortunate priests,
"L'ABBÉ VERGER.

"Advantage will not be taken, I hope, of the letters which I have recently addressed, whether to M. le Curé or to different influential personages, all breathing the love of peace, which I delusively hoped to obtain.

"The measure is full: I have made enough of enormous sacrifices of all sorts."

During the reading of this letter, the accused, speaking of M. le Curé Legrand, never ceased crying

"O, le misérable!"

The President: "Accused! if you continue such unbecoming conduct I shall order you to be put out. Gendarmes, hold the accused."

Verger: "So be it. Take me to the guillotine. I shall not be afraid."

President: "You fear nothing!"

Verger: "I fear God only."

President: "Hold your tongue, or I will have you turned out."

Verger: "I am not afraid to die. I shall face death as I face this tribunal."

President: "Once more, hold your tongue."

Verger, bursting out again: "Go and see the room where he put me. It is in his manse; it has a secret door. Go there, you will see it."

President, covering: "The audience is suspended. Gendarmes, take away the accused."

Verger, struggling: "I will struggle with you all."

The four gendarmes drag him away. When crossing the threshold, he drew himself up to his full height, saying:

"People, defend me; they are using violence. People, defend me!"

The sitting remained suspended for a quarter of an hour in the midst of the greatest tumult and agitation.

Suddenly, in the beginning of August, eighteen hundred and fifty-five, an excellent young man, the good Verger, the priest of the Tuileries, and very tenacious of his position, an ecclesiastic of the highest promise and prospects, removed his furniture from the manse of the parish of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, and threw himself upon the wide world without a profession and without resources. He published his reasons openly in lithographed circulars, which he signed with his name, and addressed to the parishioners. The curé did not vindicate his reputation. He did not put the affair into legal hands for the punishment of his calumniator. He did not go to

the police and cover the calumniator with infamy before the tribunals. He tried to obtain his incarceration in a madhouse. Moreover, he said from the pulpit:

"My Dear Brethren, — I am very sorry to tell you of the loss of one of our ecclesiastics. He is not dead, but he is gone mad. My very dear brethren, pray for him."

This strange calumniator demanded justice of the police. He told his tale to the magistracy. He learned from one of the chief functionaries of police, that the police do not mingle in the affairs of the sacristy.

Verger says:

"M. le procureur-général was warned of my complaints; M. le préfet of police was warned; the chief of the cabinet of the préfet de police was warned. And remark that, when I wrote that terrible word, I said to him myself, while brandishing my two hands upon his desk, 'It is not a man of thirty years of age who can remain dumb and inactive when every tribunal has refused to hear him. If it is necessary to finish with M. the Archbishop of Paris, I will finish with him; if it is necessary to arm myself, I will arm myself; if it is necessary to attack his head and bring it down, I will bring it down. . . .'"

"Then this gentleman answered me what you say: 'It is serious, very serious!' Yes, it is very serious. They did not believe me."

The design of causing him to be condemned as a madman was defeated by the medical man who was employed to examine him by the police. Dr. Lasseigne says:

"M. Verger appeared one day at the Madeleine, bearing upon his breast a little placard upon which was written:

“I have been hungry, and they have not fed me; I have been cold, and they have not clothed me; although I am a priest, and neither suspended nor interdicted.”

“And he placed himself in a kneeling attitude before the entrance. The prefecture of police was excited by a thing so strange, and believed it to be an act of mental alienation. I was requested to be present semi-officially at an interview which was to take place in the office of the chief of division, M. Metetal, at the prefecture. I went, and we had a long conference with M. Verger, in which we addressed to him a number of questions. My impression was that he was not mad, but singularly dangerous. I said to myself, if he is mad, the insanity can only be epileptic; but nothing in the information given to me established epilepsy. I tried to lead his mind into ways in which he could follow me.” ... After telling where he had been educated and what he had been, “he made certain allusions. He added that the young clergy had been long enough oppressed, and that it was time they should have their revenge. He told me he had not made himself a priest — to suffer and perish.

“I insisted a long time: I wished to know if he believed himself to be the victim of persecutions, this sort of delirium appearing to me to be possible. On the whole, the accused did not give any sign of delirium, only he displayed anger, and rose and struck the table. We were of opinion that he ought rather to be subjected to the surveillance of the police than placed in a mad-house.”

The President: “Then you had acquired the conviction that he enjoyed the full use of his intellectual faculties?”

Dr. Lasseigne: "At that time it was impossible to consider that man to be attacked by mental alienation: besides, he was not accused —"

Verger, with vehemence: "It was I who was the accuser."

The Vicaire-Général Bautain said he knew nothing respecting what happened in the manse.

Verger: "Nobody would know it. You refused to hear it. You were inconsolable because you could not shut me up as a madman. Ah! ah! The Inquisition did that."

The President asked the prisoner:

"What motive instigated you to commit this crime?"

Verger: "Long ago the Archbishop, the Bishop of Meaux, and several other influential persons conceived the unworthy project of making an end of me by withdrawing my powers. They have five different times withdrawn my powers, although a priest cannot live except by the altar. That is what the Gospel says. They prevented me from celebrating divine service, although I was neither suspended nor interdicted. Ever since, I have been driven to extremities. On Christmas Day, eighteen hundred and fifty-five, I went to Notre Dame in the hope of softening the heart of my Archbishop. I knelt down before him. I wrote him a most submissive letter, which ended with these words — 'accord me only an audience of ten minutes.' But the Archbishop refused it. From this time I formed the project of printing this work." (The accused shows a manuscript which he holds in his hand.) "No publisher would compromise himself by publishing it. I therefore left France to have it printed abroad. It was printed, but

not published. It was because the work (I was near the workmen while they printed it) —”

The President: “What was the subject of the work?”

Vergier: “It was a revelation of the secret conduct of the clergy.”

The President: “Was it at that period that you were recalled to the diocese of Meaux?”

Vergier: “No. That book was for me a resource.”

The President: “Was it not at that time that the Archbishop of Paris interceded for you with the Bishop of Meaux?”

Vergier: “No; it is not true —”

The President: “The letters are there, nevertheless —”

Vergier: “No — Besides, what does it matter! From whom are the letters? from the Bishop of Meaux, who will not acknowledge me as a priest of his diocese, and from the Archbishop of Paris, who would not have me in his; for everybody kicked the ball. These letters exist — yes — but you will not read them on account of the contradictions they contain. You must read everything, or nothing. You must hear the truth, and have patience to listen to it. It is an affair of fifteen days or a month. You must hear to the end. Ah! you only see a man who is dead, a poignard lifted and a man struck — you only see a scaffold erected and a man ascending it — I have worked fifteen years for this result, and you will not hear me a single day. Read then these letters, your social and eternal welfare is interested in them.”

During the year eighteen hundred and fifty-six the Abbé Guettée had an interview with the Archbishop, in which the prelate complained of “a bad priest” who had printed

a book in Belgium against the morals of himself and his clergy. The Abbé Guettée replied:

“Monseigneur, I believe you are wrong in calling him a bad priest, I have seen him twice, and he seemed to me to be very good — fort bien.”

The attempt to incarcerate the calumniator as a madman having failed, the Archbishop of Paris recommended Verger to the Bishop of Meaux. The calumniator of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, — the mendicant at the entrance to the Madeleine, — the bad priest — was made Curé of Seris, in March, eighteen hundred and fifty-six. The following letter to the Archbishop was written on the occasion by the Bishop of Meaux.

10th February, 1856.

Monsieur, — According to the desire which you have expressed to me through M. Bautain, I have hastened to recall here, M. the Abbé Verger.

He arrived here this morning, and has made a very serious revelation to me, on which subject I shall have need of the counsels of our grandeur. Not being able to go to Paris to-morrow, I send M. Josse, my grand vicaire, whom I pray you to receive with the kindness to which you have accustomed me.

Please receive, Monsieur, the homage of my respectful and devoted sentiments.

AUGUSTE, Bishop of Meaux.

On the twelfth of December he was dismissed. The reasons alleged for his dismissal were his publication of a pamphlet against a decision of the Court of Assizes at Melun, his preaching against the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and the discovery of a document called a Testament, which attacked the celibacy of the clergy.

During the nine months in which Verger was Curé of the parish of Seris, the police were watching the persons whom he had denounced. Alexis Dupont and a

batch of his associates were arrested and condemned. The trials were not public; the courts shut their doors; the newspapers published nothing but the results.

On the twelfth of December, eighteen hundred and fifty-six, the Curé of Seris was dismissed from his functions by a letter which contained the following sentence:

We think that you have need of being taken care of in a madhouse, and if you consent I shall come to an understanding with M. le Préfet about it.

In December eighteen hundred and fifty-six, the Archbishop of Paris had arranged to lock Verger up in a madhouse; and Verger was nursing those ideas of killing the Archbishop, which he had declared in the office of one of the chiefs of the police, and which are recorded in his letter to M. Parent Duchatelet, dated the thirty-first of January, eighteen hundred and fifty-six.

The evidence on the trial added little to what was previously known respecting the incidents of the assassination. While brandishing his bloody knife, Verger cried, "à bas les déesses," and "à bas les Génovefains," Down with the goddesses — down with the worshippers of Génévieve! The Archbishop recognised him and cried, "Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Malheur" or "Malheureux!"

Of the tempestuous manner in which the trial was conducted, and of the chaotic form in which it is reported, I will present a specimen; merely premising that in France, the issue of life or death depends, not on the premeditated homicide, but on the presence or absence of extenuating circumstances. Immediately on the act of accusation being read,

Verger said: "It is the Papal Inquisition which has brought me here. Among my papers — which were seized — are letters written by my enemies themselves, which show to what extent I was the victim of their abominable manœuvres. A part only of these letters have been given to my defender. I demand all. Yesterday I was subjected to moral violence in regard to my witnesses. Of sixty witnesses they have only called one. I then wrote the following letter to the Minister of Justice, begging him to transmit it to the Emperor:

Excellence, — The Advocate-General having refused, obstinately, to call before the audience to-morrow the witnesses necessary for my defence, I shall, with more right and equal tenacity, refuse to reply to justice; or if I speak, it will only be to protest against the moral violence of which I am the victim. I ask the adjournment of the session for a week.

The President: "You have accepted the debate for to-day. Is it not true?"

Verger: "It is true, and it is false. You said to me you wished my defence to be free, complete, and placed upon the facts; and, I added, — 'upon all the circumstances which brought about these facts.' For that I must have the letters written by my enemies, the members of the Inquisition."

The President: "What is this debate about? It is to learn whether the accused is guilty of the attack upon the Archbishop. The accused wishes to be an accuser: and to indulge in calumny and scandal. Is not this rather the licence than the liberty of the defence?"

Verger: "Yesterday at two o'clock, contrary to the advice of the Procureur-Général, I received from the Minister of Justice an authorisation to call all my witnesses at my own expense. But there was not sufficient time."

The Procureur-Général: "He does not wish really to produce the witnesses necessary for the defence, but to indulge in abominable calumnies. We have a libel in our hands —"

Verger: "Read it, read it —"

The Procureur-Général: "An odious libel is nothing but a gathering of monstrous inventions —"

Verger: "Read it, — once more, read it."

The Procureur-Général: "After the assassination of the king, we cannot permit the assassination of calumny."

Verger: "The defence is not free."

The President: "What do you mean by free defence?"

Verger: "I wish all the persons to be heard among whom I have passed my life, that my life may be explained by them."

The President: "Do you refuse the debate?"

Verger: "No. My witnesses!"

The President: "In consequence you must answer me —"

Verger: "I shall not say more than — my witnesses! my witnesses!"

The Court retired, and returned with a decision not to call the witnesses.

The President: "Rise and answer."

Verger: "I refuse to answer."

The President: "You refuse the debate?"

Verger: "I refuse formally."

The President: "Call the first witness."

Verger having been prevented from calling his witnesses, or reading his documents, refused to hear the Procureur-Général Vaisse.

Procureur-Général: "We have no summing up to make. The magistrate is not master of his emotions —"

Verger: "Weep then."

The President: "Hold your tongue."

The Procureur-Général: "In the moment of beginning to speak —"

Verger: "You tremble."

The Procureur-Général — "we feel disgust —"

Verger: "I also for you —"

The Procureur-Général: "at encountering such an adversary."

Verger: "Adversary! Adversary! Yes, that is the word."

The President: "Verger, won't you be quiet?"

Verger: "I will not suffer him to speak like that. I will not suffer it."

The President: "Will you hear the summing up?"

Verger: "I refuse absolutely. I refuse to him as he has refused to me, or else I shall have all my papers read —"

The President: "The accusation must do its duty as well as the defence."

Verger: "I oppose it. Everything must be recommenced."

The President: "Recommence what?"

Verger: "Everything done this morning. Everything is to do over again for my defence."

Procureur-Général: "The summing up must be heard —"

Verger, getting up: "I oppose it."

Procureur-Général — "in spite of the clamours —"

Verger: "I oppose it — the guillotine!"

Procureur-Général — "of the accused —"

Verger: "The guillotine! — the guillotine! — I will listen to nothing."

Procureur-Général — "who tries —"

Verger: "I oppose it."

Procureur-Général — "to trouble us."

Verger: "The guillotine!"

Procureur-Général: "For the accomplishment of our duty we demand the application of the law which authorises the expulsion of the accused."

Verger: "I mock it — I mock everything — there is nothing but Jesus Christ that I do not mock."

The President: "The Court will retire and deliberate."

Verger: "That's right — be off, and vive la guillotine!"

The Court on returning, having ordered his expulsion, Verger retired without uttering a word.

In his absence, the Procureur-Général said:

"Ambitious of all sorts of celebrity, he has sought the celebrity of the scaffold. Let him have it: and if at the last moment he repeats the cry he raised just now — 'people, defend me' — let him hear, what he has just heard, the cry — 'Assassin! Assassin!'"

Verger was found guilty without extenuating circumstances, and when his sentence to death was communicated to him in the Conciergerie: all he said was "What justice!"

CHAPTER V.

THE whole drama of the Archbishop and the Abbé exhibits the antipodal contrast that there is between French and British ideas and manners. I am sure it would be an unworthy thing to dwell upon this contrast in a pharisaical spirit; and I believe it would be a wrong thing to allow the occasion to pass without deriving lessons from it, suitable for the mutual instruction

of society, which is happily established between ourselves and our brave and brilliant allies.

The physiologist will not fail to see in Verger an extraordinary example of homicidal exaltation. The brain of every person afflicted with homicidal mania, which has been dissected by competent anatomists, has exhibited disease, injuries, lesions, or congestions. The patients of this malady have generally very nervous and very susceptible temperaments, and burning and sleepless heads. Physiological crises in the human organism, male and female, but especially female, have often been marked by homicidal mania. Many persons have killed others with a view to killing themselves afterwards. Many persons have been driven by an unconquerable impulse to kill their children, whom they loved passionately. The injury to the brain in all these cases is traceable to a physiological cause.

Verger saw before him only the alternative of suicide or assassination. He said he felt he must either throw himself into the river, blow his brains out, or stab the Archbishop. He could not consent to incarceration in a madhouse. There is homicidal exaltation in the monstrous state of mind in which a man could not see any escape from the madhouse except by rushing upon one or the other of the horns of a homicidal dilemma. His intellect was probably vigorous, except on this point. Moreover, there is homicidal exaltation in his family, his mother, and one of his brothers having committed suicide.

Mental philosophy explains the tendency of an idea to return, because it has been already in the mind, and to return the more frequently because it has already been frequently in the mind. Thus it was with this homicidal dilemma. Necessarily the brain is inflamed

by such thoughts, and the more it is inflamed the more it is injured and diseased. Evil thoughts, if not dismissed at once and shunned carefully, after entering the mind as curious strangers, if entertained, remain in it as destructive tyrants.

The appeal of Verger to the Court of Cassation, came on for consideration on Thursday, the twenty-ninth of January. M. Morin produced what he called three means of breaking the condemnation, in this Breaking Court.

First: The President Delangle had assumed the presidency informally, without announcing the change by an ordinance.

The supreme senate decided that an ordinance was not necessary, and, if necessary, the administrative informality was not a sufficient reason for breaking the condemnation.

Secondly: M. Morin said: "I state the dates. On the ninth January, the accusation; the tenth, the indictment; ninth and tenth, intimations; tenth, interrogatory; fourteenth, appeal against the decision which sent the case before the Court of Assizes; fifteenth, rejection; seventeenth, debate and condemnation. The accused had less than forty-eight hours to prepare his defence and name and summon his witnesses. Could the accused summon his witnesses while he was appealing to you? No. Could he after the rejection? There was no time, since he only knew it in the evening for the day after the next. The list of witnesses was kept because it was supposed there would be scandal, but who knows but their testimonies might have dissipated doubts? A decision said that the testimonies would not have been favourable to the defence, but the Court of Assizes has no right thus to paralyse the rights of the defence."

In answer to this second plea for breaking the condemnation the Court of Cassation said the delay of five days is accorded by article two hundred and twenty-nine of the Criminal Code to the accused, not merely to prepare a demand for the nullification of the proceedings prior to his interrogatory by the President of Assizes, but also to prepare for his defence. This delay, which commences from the day of the interrogatory, is not suspended by the appeal of the accused against the decision which places him in accusation, and cannot consequently, in this case, begin to be counted only from the date of the rejection of the appeal. The demand of a delay to summon witnesses is rejected sovereignly (*souverainement*) by the Court of Assizes when it decides that the hearing of these witnesses is not likely to enlighten the debates.

Thirdly: The law says: "The President, prior to applying the penalty, shall ask the accused if he has anything to say in his defence." Ten condemnations have been broken for want of these formalities. The Chamber of Peers, in eighteen hundred and thirty-four, having to deal with a hundred culprits, and clamours far more formidable than those of Verger, was forced to expel them from the audience; but, the Court of Peers established the indispensable necessity either to make every culprit appear in open court, or, at least, to have the summing-up delivered to him orally, in order that he might be in a position to state his defence.

In regard to this third means of breaking the condemnation, the Court of Cassation decided, "That a culprit expelled in virtue of the law of the ninth September, eighteen hundred and thirty-five, ought not to be brought back at the risk of nullity, to hear the read-

ing of the verdict of the jury and the sentence of the Court of Assizes; the requirements of the law which prescribes that notice shall be given to the accused after each audience, cannot be applied in a case which has only endured one sitting; and the irregularities which may have existed in the intimations afterwards, cannot give an opening to the breaking of the condemnation."

For which reasons the appeal for a new trial was rejected by the supreme judicial senate.

The business of which I have given a digest occupied a long day, and passed in a very crowded court. For many fatiguing hours I remained in the court, leaning against the pedestal of a marble statue, with a young man by my side, whose appearance attracted my attention to a degree which made me miss many fine phrases of forensic eloquence. It was a most terrible thing to witness the countenance of a young man of less than thirty, with the grief-worn features and the white corpse-like face of decrepit old age. I could not help wondering how long he would live. In reply to compassionate observers, he said that he had poisoned his respiratory organs while making experiments in the application of mercury to mirrors. Every tongue was busy, discussing the arguments of the pleadings during the absence of the court. I overheard this young man with an almost extinct voice taking the part of Verger. His antagonist said:

"You defend an assassin!"

"Assassin! Do not say that — he is my brother."

Only thirteen or fourteen hours afterwards, Verger appeared for a few seconds upon the guillotine, at eight o'clock in the morning; and there his history was quickly ended.

THE NEW BOY AT STYLES'S.

THE last half I stopped at old Styles's, said Master Balfour, was the jolliest of any.

Styles was often ill. The head usher was called away suddenly to his mother, who was dying; and the second, Mopkins, was a muff. We did as we liked with him; and whenever there was a row the senior fellows thought nothing of shying their Cæsars at his head!

"What are Cæsars?"

Books. *Cæsar de Bello Gallico*. Cæsar's crammers about pitching into the Gauls. Oh! continued the narrator, apostrophising, somewhat superfluously, his organs of vision, what whoppers he used to write to the senate! and how those Conscript parties sate and stroked their beards complacently, and sucked it all in! There was no Russell in those days, to check Master Julius's arithmetic, and tell 'em at home that, instead of killing, at one go, a hundred and sixty thousand Allobroges or Allemanni, he had been all but smashed himself, and was only saved by his crack tenth legion, who charged like bricks and — But that has nothing to do with Styles's.

One morning — quite at the beginning of the half — a new boy was brought into the school-room. A very gentlemanly boy he was; for he stepped inside the door,

and made a low bow to the school generally, which was received with a loud laugh (Styles being ill in bed). His name was Bright — Harry Bright, eleven years old, with large dark-blue eyes and long bright hair parted in the middle of the forehead, and turned under at the back, like a woman's, in a heavy glossy curl.

Every chap in the school had a nickname of some sort, and we furnished our young friend with his, before he sat down to his desk. We called him Madonna, from his beauty and the fashion of his hair. Altogether, he looked so smart, good-humoured, and engaging, that everybody was pleased, except Alf Bathurst, junior cock.

"What's that?" asked Mrs. Maxwell.

The boy who could whop all the junior division. There was a senior cock, besides — Robert Lindsay — who licked everybody.

Alf saw that he should have to fight for his comb and dignity. Madonna and he were just about the same age and weight. Alf, we knew, was game enough, and took lots of punishing; and Madonna looked pluck itself. In short, the general impression was that it would prove one of the most gratifying mills in the annals of the school. Bets were covertly made (the amount of brandy-balls and rock-cakes staked on the event was something absurd) and, in a series of secret conferences during school-hours, it was arranged that the fight should come off at twelve o'clock. Two boys were subsequently chosen as seconds for each, and a deputation of juniors waited upon the illustrious senior cock (under colour of a difficult passage in the Georgics) humbly inviting his presence in the character of referee. The reply to this was all that could be desired.

Meanwhile, Madonna sat quietly at his desk — next

to Alf's, blithely unconscious of the arrangements so anxiously making for his comfort and honour. Somehow, we forgot to tell him. It seemed so natural that they should fight!

Madonna seemed inclined to fraternise, and asked a whole lot of questions. What time we dined? If there were puddings every day? Was it a decent playground? Was smoking allowed? &c. &c., to all of which Alf Bathurst replied with a stern politeness, as one who felt that, until the event of the morning had come off, the relative position they were ultimately to hold towards each other, was not sufficiently defined for unrestrained social intercourse. Oddly enough it never occurred, even to Alf, that his neighbour needed to be informed of the impending passage of arms.

Madonna was a little puzzled by Alf's dignified manner, and still more by some expressions which escaped him. Attached to every two desks, was a small receptacle for the lexicons, &c. Perceiving that there was room here for some of his helps to learning, Madonna proceeded to fill up the vacant space when Alf arrested his hand, quietly observing:

"Better wait till after the mill."

Madonna looked at him with astonishment, which was increased when Alf added in an easier tone:

"Do you mind my having a squint at your wrists?"

Totally unconscious of the cause of Alf's sudden interest in his anatomy, and wondering, farther, why he should prefer the oblique mode of observation referred to, Madonna, nevertheless, frankly extended his hands, which Alf examined with much interest, feeling and pinching the well-defined muscles, and the firm yet flexible joints.

"Tough work, I expect!" muttered Alf thoughtfully, and let it fall.

Madonna opened his magnificent blue eyes to their full extent, and could by no means make it out; but the next moment classes were called, and no more opportunity was afforded for general conversation till the school rose.

At the first stroke of the clock the entire body, seniors and juniors, started up, and, with a wild shout, rushed to the playground, Madonna yielding readily to the common impulse, and rather curious to see what was to follow.

Arrived at the scene of expected action, his doubts were quickly resolved. Alf himself curtly informed him that, according to the custom of the school, it was necessary to decide, without an hour's delay, which was the better man, and entitled to the position of junior cock.

Madonna coloured to the eyes.

"I cannot fight," he said.

"You admit," said Bathurst, "that I can lick you, and may kick you also, if I please?"

This was a mere formula; but Madonna took it differently.

"You have no right to touch me," said Madonna, "but I can't fight — and I won't fight."

He turned away.

The eager crowd were, for a moment, stunned with surprise. Wonder and incredulity were stamped on every face. The boy who was marking out the ring stopped as though petrified. The senior cock himself betrayed as much emotion as was consistent with his dignity. I must not dwell upon this scene. It was too true — Ma-

donna declined to acknowledge Alf the better man, and yet refused to fight! There was but one inevitable conclusion — he was a coward!

At first it was hoped he was jesting; chaffing and remonstrance were tried — both were inefficacious — fight he would not. In this dilemma, Robert Lindsay stepped up to the still blushing Madonna, and taking him by the arm led him a few paces apart. The two conversed eagerly in an under-tone, while we anxiously watched the conversation. At last, Lindsay was observed to give an almost convulsive start. He carried his hand to his forehead, gazed for a moment in his companion's face, burst into a wild laugh, and turned upon his heel.

"Gentlemen," he said, "Mr. Bright persists in declining the contest." (Bob Lindsay was always choice in his expressions.) "But the reason he assigns for it, will hardly obtain credence in an assembly of British boys. He has given his word of honour to his mamma to be careful of his general beauty (of which, it would appear, that lady is justly proud); but especially of his fine eyes; and he is pledged never to expose those cherished organs to the chances of a fistic encounter."

Howls of derision followed this speech, mingled with shouts of genuine laughter — one chap throwing himself on the ground, tearing up the grass, and flinging it about him, in ecstasies of mirth.

"I have," resumed the senior cock, "pointed out to him the inevitable consequences. He is immovable. I leave the matter in your hands, and only regret that I should have been allured to the extremity of the playground on the pretence of a fight which was not to take place."

"Coward! Milk-sop! Send for his mamma! Where's

Hannah with the pap-boat?" &c. &c., yelled the incensed and disappointed crowd.

Poor Madonna turned from red to white, and looked as though he would have cried, but for a strange fire in his eyes that seemed to burn up the tears. It was a miserable sight. But how could we pity him? A fellow with a wrist like the fetlock of a thorough-bred, who almost admitted he could fight, and wouldn't! What was a black eye, or a mouse on the cheek, compared with the horrible scorn of boys?

Alf Bathurst had a spice of the bully. Thinking, moreover, to fall in with the popular view, he walked up to Madonna, and slapped him smartly on the face. Strange to say, the latter seemed scarcely to feel this additional insult. Some applause followed; but Robert Lindsay suddenly re-appeared in our midst, and made another speech.

"Gentlemen," said Bob, "far be it from me to condemn your honest indignation — but let us not stoop to be bullies and persecutors. To my mind, a coward is an object of compassion, not of resentment. Nature dozed over his composition, and omitted the most common and familiar ingredient of our mixed humanity. I have," added the kind-hearted cock, "no title to dictate lines of conduct to the junior division; but I will say this, whoever shows consideration to this unlucky stranger, is the friend of Robert Lindsay."

Boys are queer animals. No one would believe it possible, that, after the scene of the morning, Madonna would become, by bed-time, one of the most popular fellows in the school! By Jove, he was! When he recovered his spirits a little, we began to find out (fighting aside) what a jolly chap he was — gay, generous —

with altogether the sweetest temper I ever knew; he didn't know what malice was and would have been on good terms, even with Bathurst. The latter, however, like a sneaking bully as he was, never from that day forth let slip an opportunity of annoying and insulting poor Madonna. He made him a sort of fag, often struck him, and more than once spat in his face. On these occasions, Madonna's eyes would light up with the same strange fire we noticed before; but he never struck again, and seemed to accept the necessity of submitting to every indignity, as the inevitable and only alternative of his not fighting.

I'm now going back to the day of Madonna's arrival.

His bed was in a large room, in which I, and a whole lot of other chaps — fourteen, I think — already slept. And after old Mopkins, the spoony usher, had taken away the candle, we began to talk as usual. Madonna was rather silent.

"I say — you — new boy — what's your name?"

"Madonna!" said his next neighbour.

"A penny for your thoughts. I bet I know what they are."

"Tell me," said Madonna, who was sitting up in bed, swinging his nightcap, "are any of you fellows in love?"

A perfect volley of affirmatives replied. Love, you must know, was a sort of epidemic at Styles's — that is to say, it came in, at intervals, with other games. There wasn't much usually in the summer half; but when cricket, and hockey, and trapball were stopped, love came regularly in. It happened to be highly fashionable at the time of Madonna's appearance, having recently received an immense impulse from the arrival at Miss Bil-

liter's, Pallas-House Academy, of three new pupils, all pretty.

Pallas-House was so capitally close to us that, by great skill and strength, a cricket-ball might be propelled over an immense wall, into their playground. It was a rum old house, with two little turrets at one end (that nearest us), one of which was called the penitentiary, and used as a place of confinement for pupils in disgrace. We saw (at different times, of course) lots of little golden-haired captives bobbing about in this cage, sometimes playing with a smuggled doll, sometimes trying to relieve the monotony of prison-life by killing flies, or other innocent pastime. We tried to establish a system of communication by signal, but it failed. One ingenious boy thought he had hit upon a method of conveying relief and sympathy in its sweetest form — sugar-candy. A small parcel was carefully made up, and attached to the tail of a kite, the wind being fair for the penitentiary, and the prisoner on the alert; the kite was dropped gradually down the wind till it reached the necessary point, then suddenly loosed, in the expectation that the tail would drop past the prison-window. It did so, with the greatest accuracy, but the small prisoner's arm was too short to catch it; the packet descended lower than was intended, and flop it went right through the window of Miss Billiter's study! Kites were stopped for the rest of the half.

To go back to our bedroom chat. A sigh from Madonna was the next sound audible.

"Tell us all about it, old chap?" said a voice from an adjacent couch, in a mock sympathetic tone.

"If you won't make fun of it," replied Madonna.

"It's no laughing matter, I can tell you. I've seen a good deal of the sort of thing. I've had much sorrow."

"Have you, though? I shouldn't have thought it, to look at you," squeaked Poppy Purcell, across seven other chaps. "What's she like?"

"I've been in love," said Madonna, "ever since — — I don't remember when I wasn't — nine times, I think, with all sorts of women — but bosh! It's all hollow, sir, hollow. They go to school, and forget a fellow, or —"

"A fellow, — them," — put in Matilda Lyon (whose name was Matthew). "I fear, Madonna, those precious eyes of yours have much to answer for."

"I'm as constant a chap now as ever lived," rejoined Madonna, warmly, "whatever I have been, in my younger days. The world soon smudges off one's romance! Besides, I'm tired of change. I'll tell you a secret. I'm in love, and mean to be, for ever and a day, with the sweetest little creature breathing."

"Oh, of course!" "What's her name?" "How old?" "Dark or fair?" "Ringlets?" demanded several beds, the room becoming much interested.

"Eleanor Wilton," said Madonna, in a low voice. "She's an orphan, a kind of fifth cousin of mine, sixteen times removed. She came over from India, last year, after the death of her mother, to be educated, and she lives with a Mr. and Mrs. Perfect (perfect brutes, I call them), the husband a snobbish agent of her deceased papa. She's nearly ten. She fell desperately in love with your humble servant. I'd nothing in hand at the moment, having just had a split with Anne Chilcote, about dancing twice with a fellow in tunics. And we're engaged."

"Engaged!"

"Regularly booked, sir. Why not? I've had my swing. I've done. I can never love again, after Eleanor. And she is a darling, I promise you!"

We further gathered from the heart-worn Madonna, that his present lady-love was, in appearance, precisely his opposite, having large night-black eyes and raven hair, colourless cheeks, dark shades under the eyes, sad, dreamy expression, &c. &c. In short, the lover drew a very interesting and poetic picture of his lady, and concluded by assuring us that her attachment to himself, however unmerited, approached to adoration.

As for the engagement, he certainly showed us, next day, a paper written by his beloved, which the constant youth wore (in a small velvet case, like a needle-book) next his heart.

It was to the following effect, written upon pencil lines, only half rubbed out, and was evidently one of her very earliest efforts at penmanship: —

This is to give notis that I have promessed to be your true-love and when I groe up I will mary you if you like and to be your Dutiful wife till death and if not I would rather go to my mother —

You believe me,

Dear sir,

Yours truly,

ELEANOR WILTON.

We thought the conclusion rather stiff, considering the frankness of the foregoing portion; but Madonna explained that it was to be regarded rather in the light of a formal instrument than as a warm expression of feeling.

Certainly, if seed-cakes, mince and other pies, and macaroons speak the language of love, Madonna's account of his lady's devotion was fully corroborated. Every

week parcels were arriving, containing such articles as the aforesaid, and covered with the strictest and most earnest invocations to the railway authorities concerning their safe and punctual delivery. How the little lady provided these testimonials was a mystery to Madonna — assuredly, it was not through her guardians; and the most plausible theory was, that she had won over the housekeeper — as well she might, the little darling! — to forward these proofs of attachment to her chosen lord.

But a change was destined to come over Madonna.

One fatal half-holiday, it so happened that, in returning home from playing cricket on the neighbouring downs, we met the establishment of Pallas-House in full procession. The usual file-fire of glances was exchanged, as the two trains swept past each other on opposite sides of the road, but only one casualty occurred; and who should that be but the love-wasted, used-up Madonna?

Tripping at the governess's side was a new pupil, the most exquisite little fairy you can conceive. Don't think I am romancing, when I declare to you that, in all my life — and I've seen something (said Master Balfour), knocking about the world — two more beautiful human creatures than Madonna Bright and Augusta Grosvenor (for that, we soon learned, was the new girl's name) I never beheld. She had a perfect cataract of rich, brown, silky hair, eyes that glittered like stars, and she walked with the air of a little princess.

"Poppy," faltered Madonna, who was walking with Purcell, catching his companion's arm, "I've seen my fate."

"Hold up, my pippin!" replied the more philosophic Poppy. "Have a brandy-ball?"

Madonna answered (in substance) that no amount of

lollipops could minister effectually to a mind diseased; that it was, in fact, all over with him; that he never loved before, and, finally, that he could be content to perish in the course of that afternoon, if his doing so might afford even a momentary gratification to the object of his unquenchable passion.

On being reminded of his engagement to Eleanor Wilton, Madonna replied, with some warmth, that he was tired of her childish homage, and should take an early opportunity of pointing out to that young lady some more eligible investment for her affections; and finding, on arriving at home, a plum cake of unusual dimensions, he divided it among us, with a sort of disdainful pity, not reserving a crumb for himself.

Perhaps, if he had known it would be the last love-offering, save one, he was ever to receive from that source, he might have been less generous.

I won't bother you with all the extravagancies committed by poor Madonna while suffering from this severe attack. Positively, the boy scarcely ate or slept. He seemed to live upon the thought of this little fairy, and nothing else. As it happened, he saw her several times in a week — a series of lectures upon scientific subjects were being delivered at the public rooms; and these were attended by detachments from both the schools, in which the lovers were included.

I say lovers, because, either attracted by his uncommon beauty or his speaking gaze, or influenced by some odd instinct or other, the little lady seemed fully to comprehend the state of our friend's mind, and to accept his worship with considerable satisfaction. She had a thousand funny little coquettish airs and graces, all directed at Madonna, yet all tempered with a most becoming

haughtiness, which plunged him deeper than ever in love. I should think Madonna must have derived a good deal of information from those lectures.

I never saw his attention awakened but to one experiment, and that was when the whole room took hands, and the same electric shock that paralysed Madonna's elbow, elicited a scream from Augusta Grosvenor.

A strange thing was now about to occur.

I think it was about three weeks after our first meeting with Augusta, that the school one day went out to walk. At the first turn in the road we came pounce upon the establishment of Pallas-House. The schools met. As they did so, I felt my arm squeezed hard by Madonna, with whom I walked, and heard him draw in his breath as one in terrified surprise. At that instant, Augusta Grosvenor passed. By her side there walked a little girl, with jet-black hair, small pale face, and the largest eyes I ever saw. Those eyes she fixed upon Madonna with an expression that haunted me — I don't know why — for days and days. It's foolish to say days; for, to this very moment, I can recall it, and I see it now. I knew, without ever having seen her, that this was Madonna's little true-love, Eleanor Wilton.

We walked on in silence, Madonna amazed and bewildered as though he had seen a little spirit. In truth, she had passed us almost like one. I don't remember that we ever talked upon the subject. I did not know how Madonna might receive it, and, as I saw he was really very unhappy, I thought it best to say nothing. He moped about the school and playground, a totally changed being, and so provoked Alf Bathurst by his apathy, or, as Alf called it, sulkiness, that the latter tyrannised over and worried him in every possible man-

ner. It was pitiable and disgusting to see. O, if I had but been two years older! I would — No matter.

One day, Alf struck Madonna a severe blow in the face. The flush that followed it did not subside, as was natural. Headache and sickness followed; and the doctor, being sent for, directed that Madonna should be kept apart from the boys, and, if possible, despatched home. This, with proper precautions, was done, and we shortly after learned that our schoolfellow was lying at home, attacked with small-pox.

During his absence we saw but little of our fair neighbours, and only heard incidentally, that the little new girl, Eleanor Wilton, was in rather delicate health, and rarely went out with the rest of the school. The poor little soul, however, seemed to be no especial favourite of the savage old governess, for we twice saw her in the penitentiary!

At the end of two months, Madonna returned to school, perfect in health; but O my gracious, what a change! His beauty — every bit of it, except his eyes — was gone; his forehead seamed, his cheeks hollow, his hair cut short. Poor old chap!

We all pitied him, and gave him a jolly welcome, pretending not to see any alteration. All but that bully, Alf Bathurst. The ill-natured brute laughed, and made fun of him, asking what mamma said now to our pretty face? Who was to be his next love? &c.

"Look sharp, you beggar," he added, "and bring me that ball" (flinging it to the other end of the playground). "I'll see if you have forgotten the use of your stumps, anyhow."

"Stop," said Madonna, very pale. "I can't run much yet; but, if you like, I'll show you instead, a capital new game."

"Cut away, milksop! Is it one of nurse's teaching? What a lot of asses' milk it will take to make a man of you!" said Alf.

"Come here," said Madonna, addressing the fellows generally. He walked into the middle of the ground, Alf following. A circle of boys collected round them. Madonna turned up the cuff of his jacket, like a conjuror.

"You see this?" he asked, showing Alf his open palm.

"I do, you donkey!"

"Feel it too!" replied Madonna, and dealt him a smack on the face you might have heard at the end of the playground.

Bathurst staggered from the blow, and the surprise; but, recovering himself, flew at Madonna like a tiger. Several of us, however, threw ourselves between them. A fight wasn't to be wasted in that slovenly and irregular manner; and it was clear that Madonna's blood was up at last.

"You coward!" screamed Alf, over the heads of the crowd, "will you fight?"

"With the greatest pleasure," replied Madonna, politely — cool as a cucumber. "My mother, sir, is very much of your opinion as to the value of my beauty; and, having now withdrawn her prohibition, my fine eyes are at the service of your fists, provided you can reach them. Yes, you coward, tyrant, sneak, and bully!" cried the boy, growing warmer, as he proceeded, with the recollection of what he had endured, "I have a long account to settle with you; and I'll make your punishment remembered in the school as long as Styles's stands!"

Tremendous cheering greeted this warlike speech.

The fight was arranged to come off, after the school rose at five. Preliminaries were duly settled, seconds chosen (Ophelia and a boy called the Tipton Slasher, from some supposed resemblance to that distinguished gentleman, for Alf; and Poppy Purcell and Matilda Lyon for Madonna); the senior cock, in the handsomest manner, volunteering his services as referee, and this time the mill came fairly off.

I suppose, said Master Balfour, with great feeling, that a happier five and forty minutes never fell to the lot of boys, than those we now enjoyed. There we sat in a wide circle, hugging our knees, sucking brandy-balls, cheering, criticising, at the very climax of human happiness.

The end, satisfactory as it was, came but too quickly. Never was boy more beautifully and scientifically whopped, than Alf Bathurst. He wore a pulpier look, ever after that polishing he got at the hands of the despised Madonna.

It is believed in the school to this hour, that Styles himself witnessed the fight. All I know is, that the curtain of his window was ostentatiously drawn, in a manner to show that he wasn't there, of course; and also, that a mysterious order reached the kitchen, directing, without any assignable reason, that tea, which was always served at six, should be delayed twenty minutes.

If our suspicions were correct, Styles calculated the time it would take to lick Alf Bathurst, to a nicety; for, at ten minutes past six, the "Tipton" announced that Alf gave in. Amidst tumultuous applause Madonna was declared victor, and advanced to the proud position of JUNIOR COCK!

Bob Lindsay pressed his hand, with tears in his eyes, and led him towards the house.

It was a beautiful sight to see the two cocks walk away, arm in arm; the senior, the boy of fifty battles, kindly and patiently commenting upon the noticeable points of the contest; and, further, explaining to his young brother, the means he had found most efficacious in removing the traces of such encounters. Scarcely less beautiful was it to notice the manner in which the senior cock affected to ignore the fact, that any portion of the cheers that pursued them up the playground, was due to his own manly condescension.

But, although victorious in the field, our poor Madonna had other and more painful battles to fight. He had come back apparently as much in love as ever with his little coquettish princess, and, I have no doubt, counted the minutes till his first chance of seeing her. This soon occurred.

Madonna had leave one day down the town. He came back the image of anguish and despair. He had met the Pallas-House school — and Augusta, looking radiantly beautiful, had turned quickly from him, with a look of such unmistakeable horror, surprise, and disgust that he could no longer doubt the effect upon her heart of his altered visage. Eleanor Wilton was not with them.

One only chance of reviving her interest in him suggested itself to poor Madonna — it wasn't of much use — and one or two fellows of experience whom he consulted, begged him not to risk it.

He had brought back with him to school a present from his godmother, a beautiful ruby heart set round with small rich brilliants. This Madonna resolved to

offer at his mistress's shrine. In spite of all advice he did so. It went by post, unaccompanied by any communication, excepting only his initials "H. B."

We heard no more of that. As for Augusta, although he met her a score of times, she never again turned even a passing look upon her unhappy lover. It seemed as though she had come to a secret resolution not to do so.

But one remembrance did arrive for poor Madonna. It came in a queer way. We were marching one day in single file round the playground, under the superintendence of Sergeant Grace, of the Seventh Hussars; a rough chap he was, and stood no nonsense. As Madonna mournfully strutted by:

"Number nineteen — fall out!" growled the sergeant.

Madonna accordingly tumbled out, and stood at attention; a worrying position for a heart-broken lover!

The sergeant fumbled in his pocket. Madonna's heart stood suddenly still, for it flashed upon his memory that Sergeant Grace was an attendant likewise at Pallas-House, to teach what the sergeant himself described as "polite walking."

"Look'e, now," said Grace, "I believe I'm a blessed old spoon, for running this yere risk — but, darn it all! I couldn't help it — she's such a dear little thing — and I don't think she — she will — March!" concluded the sergeant in a voice of thunder, thrusting into Madonna's hand a small packet.

That drill seemed interminable to the anxious lover. At last, "dismiss!" was given, and he darted into the school, and tore open the missive.

It was a little box of choice bonbons, and under the lid was written: —

Dear, dear boy,
I'm glad you are well — I'm not.

E. W.

"Good little heart!" thought Madonna, with a pang at his own, over and above the disappointment, and quite different from it. "She does not turn from me, at least."

An interval of a fortnight or so now passed.

And I wish, said Master Balfour, that you didn't want to hear any more! I always feel choky somehow, when I talk or think of the marvellous thing that followed. Perhaps you won't believe it; but it's as true as that I'm now sitting here.

About three o'clock in the morning, on the second of June, a loud cry that sounded like "Help!" roused us all from our sleep. We started up in bed. The shutters were not closed, and the room was already grey with the coming dawn. The cry had proceeded from Madonna, who was sitting up, like the rest, but motionless, his hands clasped upon his forehead. We asked him if he was ill, and why he had cried out. He made no answer, but took away his hands from his face, and looked so pale and strange, that Purcell was moving away to call the usher.

Madonna caught his dress.

"No, no, Poppy — I'm not ill. All right," he said, forcing a smile; "I was dreaming — only dreaming — go to bed, old boy —. You don't think they heard me, do you?"

In a minute or so, he seemed, as he said, all right,

and we tumbled into our nests again to finish the night.

The next day Madonna's bed was vacant. His jacket and trousers were missing, his shoes and stockings remained. The window sash was open. He had made his exit that way, and, no doubt, by means of a familiar leaden water-pipe, which had often assisted us to terra firma.

The rest of the story I shall tell, partly from his own account, partly from what we learned elsewhere.

He said that, on the night in question, he had felt very odd and uneasy for several hours after retiring to bed, and could not close his eyes for a moment. A curious sense of lassitude and hunger possessed him; he would have given five shillings for a hard biscuit. We remembered his asking if any chap happened to have any eatables under his pillow — but nobody had. At last, towards morning, he dozed off, and had a dream.

He thought that his little true love, Eleanor Wilton, came and stood at his bedside. She was dressed in white, and carried a basket filled with curious and beautiful white flowers just budding. Although she did not speak, the idea seemed to be conveyed to him that she had brought them as her last — her parting present, and that he must take them.

Madonna strove to obey the intimation, but found he could not stir. Paralysed, somehow, he could neither move nor utter a sound. This quiescence seemed to grieve his little lady. She gazed at him for a moment with sad, reproachful eyes, then faded into nothing. Madonna awoke.

Presently he slept again. A second time came the

little ghostly visitant, with her basket of flowers now fully blown. In the centre of each was a ruby heart encircled with diamonds. Eleanor looked very wan and pale, but she smiled as she offered the flowers, and though, as before, he was powerless to reply, he understood that she was to come once again, and if he did not then answer, he would never — never — never — Before the meaning was complete she was gone, and once more he awoke, and once more he slept again.

For the third time the fairy figure stood at his side; but now so attenuated and indistinct, that he could only faintly trace her outline; and the flowers in her basket were broken, drooping, and dead. He thought she stooped over him as though bestowing a shadowy kiss, then began to disappear.

Madonna struggled fiercely to move in vain, and uttered the cry that woke us all.

He was now perfectly convinced that Eleanor was ill — was dying — perhaps dead. He would not mention his fears, but hastily resolved upon his course of action.

No sooner had we settled off to sleep again — which must have been in some five minutes — than he got up, threw on some clothes, softly opened the window, and slid down safely into the garden. It was early twilight — not a soul astir. Scaling the garden wall, he hurried round outside that of the playground till he arrived in front of Pallas-House. Something drew his attention to the window of the penitentiary — doubtless because it was the only one that had neither curtain nor shutter. Nothing indeed was visible; but Madonna felt as certain she was there, as though she had beckoned him with her hand from the window. Yet, how to

reach the room? Suddenly he remembered the gardener's fruit-ladder, which lay in an empty cow-shed. Back he flew — found the ladder — dragged, pitched, and slung it across the wall, and, in three minutes, had reached the window. He could make out nothing in the darkness within, so tried the sash — it was not secured. He pushed it up softly, and looked in. A chair, a small table with a book and a mug of water, a low couch, and upon it, sitting up, as though in expectation — Eleanor!

She exhibited not the least surprise.

"I knew you would come, dear boy," said the little thing, faintly, "but you were very long. I want to speak to you."

Madonna was in the room in an instant. In a few words, uttered with difficulty, she told him that the arrival of the ruby heart had been notified to Miss Billiter, who taxed Augusta with receiving it. That young lady having, it would appear, a desire to retain the ornament, though she discarded the donor, at first denied its possession; but, after two hours' confinement in the penitentiary, resolved to endure no more for the sake of either lover or offering, and gave in. She asserted, however, that it was not intended for her, but for Eleanor Wilton, with whose affection for Madonna she was well acquainted, and who, she knew, would unhesitatingly take all responsibility. Miss Billiter at once turned all her fury upon the latter; and, on her refusing to reveal the name of the sender, committed her to the usual prison, directing that she should have nothing but water — not even a crust of bread — until she had discarded her sullens, and accepted her mistress's terms.

Poor Eleanor, however, had been for some time very ailing, and the confinement and privation, not to mention the excitement of her mind, told more heavily upon her delicate frame than might have been apprehended. Still nothing could justify the keeping of the poor innocent nineteen hours without notice, solace, or refreshment of any kind.

As she came to this climax of her story, Madonna's rage mastered his grief. He started to his feet, intending to seek assistance; but Eleanor exerted all her strength, and held him fast.

"It is no use, Harry," she said, "I'm going to my mother; you know, I said, I would rather. Don't leave me again — oh, don't — don't! Oh, I am so glad you came! I asked God if you might, because you were my only friend. Let me lean my head on your shoulder," said the little thing. "Wait!" she added, and gently parting the long hair from Madonna's scarred forehead — white and smooth as ever to her loving eyes — she gave it one long kiss, then sunk lower, and hung upon his bosom as he knelt.

He thought she was sinking to sleep, and, almost afraid to breathe, remained perfectly motionless for nearly half an hour. Then a feeling of anxiety and dread stole over him. He looked closely at her — one tiny finger had hooked in his button-hole. He would not move it; but tenderly lifted back the small head. The heavy black curls fell back. One glance was sufficient. He thought, poor boy! he had been soothing her to rest, and a better Comforter had, meanwhile, laid his little true love in her mother's bosom!

Bewildered and stupified with grief poor Madonna remained, for some time, kneeling beside the corpse; then,

recollecting himself, placed it fitly on the low couch, kissed the yet warm lips, and went down stairs.

He met an early housemaid, who started and screamed as though he had been a ghost, which, it is probable, he much resembled. To her he said that a child — his cousin — was lying dead above, and that he was hastening to tell his friends and hers.

The servant tried to detain him; but he walked down stairs, opened the front door and proceeded straight to the school, and to Styles's room. There he related the circumstance of his dream, and the sad story of this little lady's imprisonment and death.

Styles — when he wasn't in school — was a kind, good, old chap, just and decided, and always did the right thing — which is a great point, you know.

He wrote instantly to his friend, the clergyman of the parish, who was also a magistrate. This gentleman came to him directly, and I don't know exactly what was the result of their consultation; but a rather rapid correspondence ensued with the governess at Pallas-House.

It was reported that a coroner's inquest would be held on the poor child. This, indeed, was not done; but you'll be glad to hear — at least, I was — that that act of tyranny cost Miss Billiter her school, and that she now goes out teaching, at eighteen pence an hour.

Madonna never recovered his former spirits. He left at the end of the half, and his friends sent him abroad with a tutor; but he became so fretful, irritable, and impatient of control, — at least, of that sort of control — that his father yielded to a curious fancy that had seized

him in Paris, and procured his enrolment in the French marine. This was just at the beginning of the war.

Madonna was appointed to the Ville de Paris and sailed to the East, carrying the flag of Admiral Hamelin. At the attack by the ships upon the sea-forts, at the first bombardment of Sebastopol, the Ville de Paris got into a hot position. She lost several officers and many men, and a fragment of the same shell which killed two aides-de-camp of the admiral, laid poor Madonna lifeless on the deck.

The French officers kindly collected every little article of value belonging to him, and, cutting off a mass of his bright curls, transmitted the whole to his relations. Among other things was a small velvet case which was found in his bosom, and within it a little paper written in a child's hand. You've heard it:

This is to give notis that I have promessed to be your true-love and when I groe up I will mary you if you like and to be your Dutiful wife till death and if not I would rather go to my mother —

You believe me,

Dear sir,

Yours truly,

ELEANOR WILTON.

HOW THE OLD LOVE FARED.

I.

ONE morning the sun shone gloriously from his blue home in the skies athwart a few pale yellow clouds. Then its rays fell disheartened and cold on some two or three hundred yards of murky atmosphere, beneath which lay a "rising town."

The streets were something narrow, and the houses were curiously jammed, and had a permanently blackened look; but what they lacked in size or beauty, they compensated for in number. Seafaring men stood talking in groups at the corners of the crossings. Every pair of trousers in the place was more or less daubed with tar; and some of those who wore them were fine stalwart specimens of the Saxon race, with bullet head, bull-dog neck, handsome sunburnt face, and crisp flat yellow curls. Small boys of five years old wore their fathers' sou'-westers. One jostled another as he passed along the street; another young 'un was climbing up a coast-wall, in a sort of fly fashion, inserting his toes in invisible chinks, and holding on by projections not to be discerned by ordinary eyes. He fell more than once, and from a fair height too; but rose nothing daunted, and doggedly recommenced the ascend. They all wore a reckless, self-

reliant air, and were, I suppose, of the proper stock to make British sailors. Even the less respectable of the women who were wrangling among the men, differed strangely from the faded worn-out objects who are daily placed before the magistrate in our London police courts. Their laughter was loud, their voices deep, their limbs massive. Very virile indeed they looked, and were. Further on to the right, some stupendous works were in course of construction. Thews and sinews were to be seen there, such as only England produces, toiling doggedly and perpetually. Steam-engines of various forms and uses were toiling also after their fashion — here to pump water in, and there to pump water out. Besides these, there were some hundreds of big horses dragging enormous loads, calmly, as if they were quite used to the engines, and cared less than nothing about their noise. They were of the sort of animals foreigners are so much smitten with when they see them in the dray-carts in London, very carefully tended; many of them were gaily ornamented with ribbons, plaiting of hair, brass settings, and the like, according to the taste and ability of the man who looked after each particular horse. The works themselves were well worth an examination. The workers were pushing out groins and breastings which must have astonished the sea as they gradually forced it out of its old landmarks. It happened more than once that it had in the nighttime arisen and revenged itself, and that in a few hours the labour of months had been swept away. But the next day saw men calmly setting to work to repair the damage with double care, and replace the wall with fourfold strength. More than a score of broad acres were already re-deemed from the salt waters. Here and there might be observed

thoughtful-looking men standing, watching keenly and with contracted brows the progress of things.

Standing rather apart, with folded arms and a profoundly discouraged air, a young gentleman was likewise gazing round him. He was broad-shouldered, rather under-sized, but not ill-made, and muscular. He had full blue eyes, a quantity of hair of a tawny red, a large mouth garnished with a set of capital teeth. Naturally his smile was constant, bright, and jovial; but now it was considerably overcast. He walked up to one of the contractors with the air of a man who has made up his mind to a last effort.

"Then you do not see any prospect of employment for me, Mr. Langford?"

"No, I do not indeed, Sellon. You see, Renny manages it all, and he has the cash. That place would have just suited you, and you would have done the work far better than Renny's nephew. It's not the right man in the right place, Stephen. But the man is in the place; and right will not turn him out, while might keeps him in. I'm very sorry for it, Stephen; but it cannot be helped."

"Well; good-bye, then, Langford. I shall be at Wendon on Sunday." They shook hands, and parted.

II.

It was Sunday in the old town of Wendon; and the cracked bell of a large church was clanging forth its invitation to people to enter its opened doors. It was an old church — you might tell that, by its strange, high, lumbering pews, which no devout young Oxford curate

had yet swept away. The windows were cobwebbed and dusty, with here and there a pane of stained glass in quaint pattern; these were distributed with perfect irregularity. These windows looked on to the backs of gloomy houses, and on to worn gravestones, where the forefathers of those who now stood there, slept. Long, tangled, sickly grass twined about the gravestones; one or two were ornamented with marigolds and oyster-shells. Some trees of smoke-dried green slowly grew and slowly decayed by the side of the old church. The bell-ropes hung into the body of the building, and a stove reared its unsightly pipe in the centre, supported by iron bars, which radiated from it in every direction. The churchwardens were already seated — or rather, enthroned — in canopied pews, and looked down with the contempt natural to officials on the rest of the scanty congregation. They were substantial shopkeepers, and had every right to do so. The pews at the side were of an extra height. Their seclusion sometimes promoted intense devotion — sometimes, great levity. A few school-girls sheltered their whisperings in these depths, and some aged and not very reputable or handsome looking old men in coifs and caps were thinly sprinkled higher up. A glance at the pile of loaves ranged behind the churchwardens might possibly account for their attendance. In the linings of these pews every shade and hue in green must have been exhausted. Some were of a rich brown and tawny aspect; others were violently green, and very woolly in substance; sundry of them were worn and moth-eaten, the rotten wood had fallen away from them; and holes were present in the flooring, of which one could only guess the probable extent. Against two of the pillars were slips of wood, and thereon were inscribed

arms, and other heraldic devices; also, names purporting to be of those men who had in that parish served the honourable office of mayor. The dates were respectively affixed; some were as old as seventeen hundred and twenty. Their honoured remains now mouldered within the dreary precincts of this venerable edifice, and their dignity was of strangely little moment to them. The clergyman looked like a gentleman; an observer would guess that he was also a bon-vivant. He read the service in a speedy, yet orthodox manner. The congregation was not large, and the clerk's responses were alone audible.

Just before the confession, a pretty dark-eyed girl glided down the aisle, with a rather conscience-stricken air, opened with some difficulty one of the doors, and hid herself immediately in the very highest pew—there she knelt down to say her short prayer. Within just as much time as suggested the idea that he had lingered outside in order not to appear together, Stephen Sellon entered, and seated himself in the adjacent pew. The two behaved very well during the service, taking only stealthy, innocent glances at each other, and even these at long intervals: but when the sermon was read, and the benediction said, the girl remained a little longer than usual on her knees, and Stephen was waiting for her when she rose. They walked silently together out of church, and turned on to a broad walk, shaded by trees, which bordered the river on which the town stood. As they got further and further away from the departing congregation, Stephen, being an enterprising youth in all he undertook, possessed himself of her hand, and put his face under her bonnet in such fashion that she could not choose but look at him. And he looked long, but

not apparently making himself the happier for so doing, for at the conclusion he gave a great sigh.

"Margaret, my darling, I've no good news for you. I've been up to the dock-works; but the place Langford hoped to give me is filled, and there's no chance of another opening. They don't want young, untried hands there, and of brains there is plenty and over. These are hard men, Margaret; they might have given me a trial."

"But, Stephen," said the girl, and her voice faltered a little, as she spoke, "you know what you wish cannot be. I cannot leave my father, he is aging sadly. I think his poor eyes are growing dim, and now he would rather hear all his beautiful music played to him than do it himself; and my idea, Stephen, my great hope is, that I may be able to take his pupils for him."

"You would do it well, Margaret; you have a wonderful knack of managing people."

Margaret smiled, and in her smile there was a peculiar mocking expression, which seemed like a ripple about her mouth. She became grave again.

"You don't know how hard I practise at nights, and how I treasure up his instructions. If I can induce one or two families to let me take his place, that will do much. And then, when he is so old he can work no longer, I can still support him as he has been accustomed to live. He has worked for me, it is fit that I should work for him."

"But if I could get work near, you need not leave him, Margaret; we could marry, and all live together."

"No, Stephen, we are too young to fetter ourselves, with such uncertain prospects. Alone we may struggle, and if we fall we fall alone, and drag down no others;

but were we married, and your employment so uncertain, cares would come on us more quickly than we could meet them. Believe me, we are best single."

There was no selfishness about the young fellow, and yet man-like he could not forbear the answer, "Margaret, you think more of your father than you do of me. My young life —" he stopped abruptly.

"I should be no good wife to you, Stephen, if I failed as a daughter; so do not press me more, dear Stephen. God knows I am sorely tried already," and the pent-up tears came at last.

Then Stephen inwardly called himself many frightful names, of which unmanly wretch and brute were the least severe; but he only said audibly:

"I know it, Margaret — forgive me," and the words were hardly out of his mouth, before he was forgiven, I suppose, for the hand was again placed confidingly in his. He continued, "The worst is yet to come, Margaret; I have undertaken to work my way out to India, and the captain has promised to get me engineering work as soon as we arrive. It is no degradation," he said, stoutly. "I did hope to have begun higher up; but I've never shirked work, and I'll show that a gentleman can do as good a day's work as any one. I've toiled with dust, and dirt, and oil, and what not, and I'll do it again. I know my trade thoroughly, the lowest as well as the highest part of it; it's only to begin over again, and I'm young and strong."

"Yes, it's all true," said poor Margaret, and these few words were all she could say.

"I shall not forget you, Margaret; it may be twenty years before we meet again, but even then, I shall be yours only."

Margaret smiled, but this time it was a poor, wan, struggling smile. "I shall be old and faded then, Stephen."

"It does not matter," he returned, with a steady, loving gaze. "You may be old and faded, worn and shrivelled; but you will be more to me than any other woman."

Here they turned their steps back to the church.

"Well, Stephen, I bind you by no promise; we will follow the promptings of our own hearts. We have the world before us, and God to aid us," she said.

They walked on silently for a little time. — "We must part now, dear Stephen."

"I sail to-morrow, Margaret."

They stood and gazed sadly on the gravestones; there seemed nothing but an atmosphere of dampness and decay around them, only the warm love and young hopes in their breasts; but these triumphed, even in the sorrow of the hour. He held her in his strong arms, for one last caress, and then released her. In another minute he had gone. And so they parted with wrung hearts, fearing, as many young lovers have feared, that the hour-glass of time, or the scythe of death, would stand between them in this life.

III.

STEPHEN SELLON pulled his hat over his eyes, and bent his steps towards the little inn, where his worldly goods were packed ready for transit, in a depressed and remorseful state of mind. He was miserable enough, and though he bit his lips and clenched his teeth, it was hard work to keep the tears from starting. It was

in vain that he inwardly exhorted himself not to feel this wringing pain at his heart; that he repeated to himself, at first mentally, and afterwards aloud for greater effect, that hard wise saying of Queen Elizabeth, "Time will comfort us, and why not do for ourselves Time's office?" Nature, not manhood, was uppermost. His dinner was dispatched, and then he lighted his pipe, crossed his legs, and gazed moodily into the fire. He folded his arms tightly across his chest, thinking of her. Then he opened the window, and leant out with some romantic idea that the wind would waft her breath to him, or that the same moon should look down on both. He had not naturally a genius for self-torment, quite the reverse; but in love a man will do such things. In his mind's eye he beheld her as his wife; and, again, he saw her fretted and worn, struggling for her father with adverse circumstances, and sinking quietly, but surely, while his arm would be far from her. Then an organ-boy added his mite of torture, and commenced Angiol' d'amore, a song he had often heard Margaret sing; he turned away as if he had been stung. It suggested unfaithfulness, and he tried to recall her actual words. No vow had been given, though much had been implied. So, being driven from the window by the organ, he returned and faced his friend, the fire, watching ring after ring of pale blue smoke ascend, until he fell into a sort of doze, then started up, looked at his watch, got his luggage together, and hurried off in time to catch the night-train for Town.

He got into an empty second-class carriage, placed his carpet-bag under his head, spread his plaid on the seat, stretched himself out at full length, and, tired in body and mind, fell asleep, and woke in London. The

sharp morning air, the murky atmosphere, the huge pile of houses, broke on his eyes as he yawned and shivered with that uneasy, unwashed sensation which a night's travelling generally leaves. There was not more time than sufficed to swallow a cup of hot coffee, and reach the South Eastern terminus for the down-train to Folkstone.

A merry little French peasant woman was waiting there, with her three children, to return to la belle France. Her coloured handkerchief, gay ear-rings, and the foreign appearance of the party, had of course secured her the usual amount of staring with which Britons always favour strangers. Stephen handed her into the carriage he intended to occupy, and then her small, dark, blackeyed children. At each station they put their heads out of the window, and exclaimed, in high-pitched voices and most curious accent, "How far is it from London, portair?" Either their thirst for this knowledge was insatiable, or they only understood the question and not the answer, for they repeated the experiment at every opportunity, to the intense delight of the guards. The little vivacious woman chatted away to Stephen; she told him all her history, why she had been to England, how she had found the people kind, but sad; and not only ignorant, but absolutely unteachable, in matters of the cuisine. A sallow lank gentleman, who sat opposite, just at this point of the conversation suddenly directed a small stream of tobacco-juice out of the window, managing with exquisite dexterity to avoid Sellon's nose by a hair's breadth. Sellon looked up with an ireful expression.

"I guess I did that cleverly," remarked his vis-à-vis.

"I'll thank you not to do it again," returned Stephen curtly.

"Do you practise spitting, sir?"

Stephen, still in wrath: "Not so near people's faces."

"Well, now," rejoined the passenger, who was an American, "I calculate *I* can paste a fly four yards off."

Three days from that time Stephen was at Marseilles, and was engaged there at seaman's wages to work under the engineer in the Peninsular and Oriental steam-ship *Ava*. It sailed, and he sped on his way; if his heart was heavy, his spirit was good; his belief in Margaret's faithfulness was very considerable; his belief in his own was amazingly firm.

IV.

It was perhaps a dozen years after this that a lady, warmly clad in silks and furs, walked down the principal street of Wendon one winter's day. She carried a small roll of music under her cloak, and stopped at one of the large cloistered houses that flanked the cathedral in their well-bred gloom and stillness. She rang the bell, and was quickly admitted into the drawing-room. She opened her music, laid aside her wrappings, and revealed the face of Margaret Meriton. Full, gay, handsome, and careless, with a bewitching drollery about the mouth, and a rather masterful eye. Presently, the door was opened, and a tall and wilful-looking girl, with a pair of flashing blue eyes, almost ran in. She would have embraced Margaret on the spot, but the latter drowned the effort in her own significant way: she laid her hand on the young lady's shoulder, saying, "Well, Cecile, how is the voice, and how have you progressed with the song?"

"O, Miss Meriton, papa says I am hoarse, and that I have a cold; but let me try."

For myself, I think it an undoubted fact that school-girls pay greater attention to lessons received from masters than from their own sex; and I make no question that, when the enlightened and platonic nature of the age admits of youths being instructed by female professors, the converse of the proposition will hold good. At the same time, there is another fact to be placed against this, as has always been the case with every fact since the world began; and that is, that a woman of a certain age, who has self-control, and has cultivated her powers of fascination, can, if she chooses to do it, acquire an influence over young girls which almost amounts to idolatry on the one side, and against which even a lover can hardly hold his own. So, Margaret Meriton, who liked to be charming, and was necessitated in her character as music-teacher to eschew flirting, made herself particularly charming to her pupils, who all adored her after the fashion of young girls. We may also suppose, if we like, that she thought a little of poor Stephen, and for his sake did not wish to lose her skill in the art of being delightful for want of practice. So the two sat down, and proceeded very amicably for some time. At last the fantasy seized Margaret that Miss Vereker should repeat a certain passage a given number of times, as a penalty for a falling short in the mode of performing it. The young girl's spirit did not bear this burden very meekly; first her pride rose, then mortification did battle with pride, and lastly, the spirit of sullenness descended, and utterly paralysed Miss Vereker's vocal powers. A decided pause ensued. Margaret, smiling to herself as the altered intonation fell on her ear, turned round, and met such a blaze of indignation on the pretty face as (we are sorry to record it) made her smile a great deal

more. Then she commenced the song herself. The refrain was,

Better trust all, and be deceived,
And weep that trust and that deceiving,
Than doubt one word which, if believed,
Had blessed thy life with true believing.

She sang it deliciously, and in so doing forgot, or seemed to forget, her pupil, her home, and her father's people. The inexorable spirit of music spoke to her of other things; and, as her fingers wandered over the keys, her face grew very wistful, almost sad, and she no longer remembered even to tease Miss Vereker, who was affected like Saul, in so far that the mutinous demon was in some sort charmed out of her; and she was pondering how she might best descend from her pedestal of pride, and make submission to Margaret, without losing her dignity. The song was finished, and both came back to realities. Margaret did not care about conquering herself, but was wondrously fond of conquering other people; so she devoted an instant to Miss Vereker, and having ascertained by an almost imperceptible glance that young lady's state of mind, she proceeded to apply the actual cautery. She took the song, and gave it to her, saying very sadly, "Until to-day, I always sang that song with pleasure, Cecile, but you have joined to it a less pleasant memory; I hope you will like it better from this time than I shall;" and she bent over it, and with her pencil wrote on the margin, Revolte. Cecile Vereker gave a convulsive gulp; but, before she could utter the words of contrition which hung on her lips, a youth of seventeen years, the facsimile of his sister, entered hastily. "May I see you home, Miss Meriton?"

I have stayed in on purpose," he added, in a boyish pleading manner.

Margaret was arranging her shawl round her shoulders, and she did this very deliberately, bending down her head, while an amused smile played about her lips. Meanwhile the boy eyed her as if he longed to assist her, but refrained, lest he should meet with a repulse. Possibly some memory of former rejections aided his apparent moderation. Then she looked up, and gave him her hand. "No, I thank you, young George; a poor music-mistress hardly needs an escort. Good-night, Cecile."

The lad followed her to the door with a provoked look on his handsome young face. I dare say that young George grated on his ears. He returned to his sister, and regarded the fire. "She is too handsome to walk alone. I wish I were a man, Cis, and then I would marry her."

This new view made Cis deliberate a little. The result was favourable. "That would be very nice, George, and then I need not take any more singing lessons of her — at least, unless I liked the songs particularly," she added, as her eye fell on the word *Revolte*.

Margaret gave two more lessons on her road, and then walked quickly home, and safely too, in spite of young George's fears.

Her father, a poor gentleman in the first instance, became poorer still: an amateur musician, he was reduced to make his pleasure minister to his necessity. His health, as we know, failed him more than his fortune; for as Margaret had said, so she had done, and in the matter of a daughter he was decidedly a much to be envied man. When she returned, he was sitting in

his chair by the fire, thinking long of her, as the Scotch say; in her eyes he looked, each time she came back, more gentle, feeble, and shadowy than before. She busied herself about him buoyantly and pleasantly, as was her wont.

V.

IN quickly told tales like this there is no room, as there is no need, to detail the course of each day which went to make up her life. Margaret Meriton was fast growing rich. I don't mean that she had amassed landed property, but she had for many years been liable to the income tax (all English hearts will feel for her and with her in this respect). Work was a law and necessity, but she did her work easily; it suited her, and her gains were sufficient to support her father in great comfort. She was, moreover, much liked by the families around; her unflagging gaiety of spirit, her quick talents, and splendid voice, made her a welcome addition to every society. No tidings from Sellon had ever reached her — yet, in spite of it, she grew happier, handsomer, and stouter; she was not a-weary because he came not; and, indeed, presented no resemblance to the Marian of the Moated Grange.

Ten years from the time we last portrayed her she entered her fortieth year. It was a winter evening; there had been a driving shower of sleet and snow, with a keen, bitter, north wind; the foot passengers in the street were whipped, blinded, and at last cowed by it, and retreated into their houses; the houseless poor betook themselves to alleys and doorways for shelter. The skies were sullen and lowering, and a dense mass of pale grey

to the north-west afforded every prospect of more rough weather. I do not think any one could look more comfortable or handsome than Margaret Meriton, as she sat making the hot coffee in the snug study, clad in rich garments of sober hue, as befitted her age and purse. Her father was still alive, and was seated in the self-same chair. His head was very white, and quite bowed on his breast, and his long thin fingers beat time restlessly. She spoke only a few words to him now and then, and they were caressing, and such as might have been used to a child. At last she settled herself in her own lounging chair, cut open a new book, and was soon deep in it. Gradually the new book found its resting-place on the floor, and Margaret reposed calmly. There was a rumbling of carriage-wheels close to the house, and then a halt. But there was no magnetism in the air to warn Margaret of any one being near her, more than that gentle shadowy man whom she had tended for so many years. Then a footstep in the hall, and hand on the door. Even the seven sleepers awaked at last, and when the door opened Margaret started to her feet, fully prepared to deny that she had been otherwise than wide awake. She heard a deep voice say, "I know the way," then came a face bronzed fiery red, full blue eyes, not altogether strange to Margaret — at least she had seen such in her dreams — a mass of hair, beard, moustache, and whiskers of a hue which was pale only beside the face. All this surmounted a figure huge in every way, but especially in breadth. Margaret stood wondering — and the figure stood wondering also. Like the Ancient Mariner, "he fixed her with his glittering eye," and as he performed this operation he drew off wrapping after wrapping, and at length stood confessed

as Stephen Sellon, weighing at least sixteen stone. He was not a tall man, so appearances did not assist him on that score. Then the blue eyes danced with amusement, the white teeth showed themselves, and a hearty, full, sonorous laugh broke the ice.

"Margaret, do you not know me?" He stepped forward, and kissed her, at first lightly on her cheeks, and then putting her back, with another glance and another laugh, he followed up that kiss by many others, and they came so fast and warm that Margaret had not really presence of mind to resist. "I ascertained you were still Margaret Meriton, or you would not have seen me here to-night. Is this your father?"

She led him up to the old man gently. "Speak tenderly to him, Stephen, he is quite childish now." Something in the subdued womanly tone of Margaret's voice gave Stephen a choking sensation; however, he cleared his throat, and shook hands with Mr. Meriton.

The poor gentleman looked up with his wan apprehensive smile. "You'll be kind to Margaret, sir, you'll be kind to her," and then he rambled on incoherently.

Margaret had not forgotten how to blush, and at this random speech of her father's the blood rushed up in torrents to her hair roots, leaving a transient crimson on her throat and neck. Apparently this enchanted Stephen; he rubbed his hands, and arranged his tawny beard, and sat down, and watched Margaret as she poured out coffee for him, with the bright, cheerful, trusting look of twenty years before.

"Ah, Margaret," he continued, laughingly. "I swore that were you faded, worn, and weazen, I would still be true; but you have not fretted for me, you have not

the assurance to pretend it. Am I absolved from my oath?"

Margaret raised her eyes with a malicious glance, signifying, *Et tu, Brute!*

"Yes, I know," he added, surveying rather ruefully his own ample person. "We have both much to forgive." There was no explanation asked, for none was required; they both felt supremely happy.

Shall we leave them so? Ah, young lovers! would you believe it possible that that happy, handsome, comfortable-looking woman is Margaret Meriton, who, a score of years before, was condemned to separation, uncertainty, and work for her daily bread; or that good man, so jovial, frank, and portly, should be the exiled lover. Take courage — "men die, and the worms eat them, but not for love." They had each done their duty, not sadly and sternly, but merrily and well, and their tree of love blossoms, though late in life. Perhaps, one of the things we love best to see, is the gentle, grave beauty of some autumnal flower, which gladdens our eyes when the summer has fled, and the unkindly drip of the winter rain is at hand, and the sky is ashen grey, and our mother earth brown and lifeless.

HELENA MATHEWSON.

CHAPTER I.

My father was rector of Lichendale, a little, grey-walled town, of which few but north-country people have ever heard. My mother died when I was quite a child, leaving me — little Helena, as I was always called — with no other companions than my two brothers, Paul and Lawrence, and our faithful, old nurse, Hannah. My eldest brother, Paul, was grave and moody; and Lawrence and I, who were warm allies, were nearly always quarrelling with him. Lawrence could not bear to hear what Paul so firmly maintained; — that unless Helena were a better girl, and more careful over her spelling, she would be burnt alive after she died. Not seeing the inconsistency of this terrible threat, and, fearing from Paul's authoritative tone, that he had the power to execute it, Lawrence would take up my cause with fiery zeal, and often cudgelled Paul into granting me a milder sentence. We used to take our lesson-books into the study every morning; and, while I learnt my spelling, my brothers read and construed with my father.

But Paul soon grew too old for mere home-schooling; and, after much secrecy and mysterious preparation, he was sent to the grammar-school at Sawbridge. Lawrie and I made merry over his departure. We had wilder

games than ever in the garden and woods, and got into twice as many scrapes as before; so that sometimes even Hannah lost all patience with us, and dragged us — little trembling culprits — before my father, who lifted his kind eyes from his book, and tried, with but little success, to look displeased.

Those happy days passed too quickly. Lawrence went to school; and, after two or three years there, to Rome. He had always said he would be an artist; and he did not flinch from his plan as he grew out of childhood, but adhered to it so steadily that at length my father consented to his going to Italy to study. He was very young to be sent so far alone; but my father had lived for so long in Lichendale, that he seemed to have forgotten how full of danger and temptation a city like Rome would be to one eager and reckless as Lawrence.

Poor Lawrie! I remember our last parting well. He was so glad to be going to Italy, so sorry to leave Lichendale, and so charmed with the unusual hurry and bustle, and his suddenly acquired importance, that smiles and tears chased each other away in quick succession from his face. I can see now his last, sad look, as the mail-coach, which had stopped for him at our gate, drove off; and I remember turning out of the sunny garden into the house, and running upstairs that I might sob undisturbed in some quiet hiding-place. But Paul, who had come over for the day to say good bye to Lawrence, soon discovered me; and, instead of trying to comfort me, talked in a slow, measured moan of the wickedness of my grief, and of his belief that despondency was a child of the devil.

Lawrence's letters were frequent and affectionate, and at first almost homesick. The pleasures of Rome

were great, he wrote, but still he loved Lichendale and Helena, far, far more dearly than ever, and often longed to come back. Gradually, however, another tone crept into them. There were fewer allusions to home, and to the time when he should return to us; but, instead, the thin blue sheets were covered with accounts of the grand English families that he met, whose patronage seemed to intoxicate him, and of beautiful ladies, whom, I feared, he liked better than little Helena, if they were really as lovely as he described them. Sir Edward Stamford, the owner of Lichendale Hall, and who would have been the great man of our neighbourhood had he ever visited it, was one of the acquaintance of whom we heard most. My father regretted this much; for reports had travelled home that the life Sir Edward led abroad was wild and dissipated; and those who recollected him at Lichendale, in the old Baronet's time, declared that he had been always self-willed and passionate.

Lawrence had been absent six years. I was grown into a tall, shy girl of sixteen; and Paul, after a successful career at Cambridge, was on the eve of being ordained. Surely, Lawrence would soon come back, I thought. My father also longed for his return, and wrote to urge him to leave Rome, at least for a while. We were full of glad expectation. My father counted the weeks that would elapse before his return, and I counted the days and hours, which I thought would never pass.

Before that day came a more terrible — a more suddenly terrible one. A letter came for my father from Italy, but not directed in Lawrence's hand. I took it into my father's study myself, and watched him as he read it. He seemed to dread evil. He broke the seal slowly, and paused before he dared to glance at the con-

tents. I was so frightened and impatient that I could have torn it open, had it been bound with iron, and my father's delay was dreadful to me. One look at his face, as he stared in horror at the short, Italian sentence, confirmed my worst fears, and I did not need to hear the word "Dead!" rise slowly to his lips, to strike the awful certainty through me, that Lawrence — affectionate, wilful Lawrence — would never come back to us. I did not scream or faint. I felt the longing that I have had from childhood, whenever I have been unhappy or terror-stricken, to creep away with my grief and hide; but I could not leave my father, pale and ghastly as he looked. Thank God! I did not. For years he had had symptoms of heart-disease. I clung to him in silence, thinking that it was only his great mental pain that made him so deadly still and white. I chafed and kissed his hands; and, in grief for his grief, almost forgot my own. "Paul — send for him!" he sighed. I left the room, wrote a short note to summon him, and then hastened back to the study, for I began to fear my father was ill.

In those few minutes Death had entered, and claimed his victim. What a night of misery I passed! I longed to die. Why was I spared? — spared to pain and mourning and craving grief?

CHAPTER II.

NEARLY two years passed, and I still lived at the dear old rectory. Sir Edward Stamford, the patron of the living of Lichendale, had written to offer it to Paul when he heard of my father's death. The letter was kind, and full of polite regrets that they should most probably never meet, as he intended to remain always

abroad. There was no mention of Lawrence in it; which I thought strange. My brother hesitated for some time before accepting a living from one whom he chose to call a sinner in the sight of the Lord; but his affection for Lichendale; for its grand, old parish church, and the sober, godly towns-people, overcame these scruples, and he settled down into my father's place, if not to fulfil its duties as mildly, at any rate with as rigid conscientiousness and self-denial. Hannah had left us, to live with some orphan nieces of hers in another town; so I was Paul's little housekeeper, as I had latterly been my father's. There were none of the few families of our own rank in Lichendale that I much liked, or with whom I kept up any great intimacy, so that I often felt sadly lonely. Paul loved me in his grave way, but he seemed to think that any unnecessary display of affection was harmful, and I cannot remember his ever petting or caressing me. Still, after the first great grief for Lawrie and my father had been softened by time, I was happy — in a sort of quiet, listless way. The country round Lichendale was beautiful. On one side, was the park, with the Hall peering through the trees; and, on the other, the red sands which the tide rarely covered, stretching away to the silver sea-line. I used to take long walks by myself on these sands, or in the woods. I did not read much; for the only books that Paul allowed me were what I did not care for; either abstruse treatises on religion, or biographies, in which the history of the man was made subservient to all manner of doleful morals, and melancholy hints to sinners. We lived very simply. Lawrence had left many debts in Rome; and, to pay these, it was necessary for a few years to give up many luxuries, and to part with one of our

trusty old servants. So I found some pleasant occupation in little household duties.

This was my life when I was eighteen; and it was then that Sir Edward Stamford suddenly returned to Lichendale. He was brought by the report of an approaching dissolution of Parliament, people said; for, they whispered, he meant to stand for Lichendale, to turn out the present sleepy old member. Lichendale is one of the smallest borough towns in England; but, at the passing of the Reform Bill, everybody thought it likely to become a populous seaport. There were rumours of docks to be built, and new lines of traffic to be opened; and the old inhabitants, terrified at the prospect of these changes, swore vengeance against the different companies that were to effect them; but, as time wore on, and year after year the sea gradually receded from the town, these projects had to be abandoned, and people began to see that Lichendale was doomed to sink into a quiet, decaying town; instead of rising to any great maritime importance, and they almost questioned the necessity of its being represented. The constituency was small and tractable, with but vague political notions. Colonel Peterson had been elected more on account of his high character as a squire and country gentleman, than for anything else; and even though Sir Edward should enter the lists, with his brilliant talents and strong opinions, yet it would be doubtful, unless his character could bear comparison with the honest old colonel's, whether he would succeed in his attempt to wrest the borough from his hands.

On the afternoon of the day which followed Sir Edward's return, Paul bade me get ready to go and call with him at the Hall. I dared not disobey; yet the thoughts of venturing, even with my brother's protection,

within that terribly grand house and encountering its master, made me feel shy and frightened. But our walk through the park, with our feet sinking deep into the mossy, daisy-spotted grass, and the sea-wind making a low, surging sound in the dark pine trees round us, freshened me up, and gave me a merry courage. I danced along, laughing at the notion of my going like a grand dame to call on the lord of the manor in the afternoon, — I who had spent the morning in mending stockings, and shelling peas. At another time, Paul would have reproved me for my wild spirits; but he was now busy turning over and over and perfecting the speech of welcome and thanks with which he meant to greet his patron. We reached the great portico. I had once been shown over the Hall by a cross old housekeeper, but I had never before called there, or leisurely examined any of the beautiful rooms; so that I was quite delighted that Sir Edward delayed coming to us, and left me time to look at all the curiosities with which the spacious ante-room was filled. Sir Edward kept us waiting a long time; and when he at length entered, he looked pre-occupied and somewhat constrained. He was about thirty, to all appearance; tall and firmly built, with a face passion-worn and pale, yet strangely attractive. He hardly raised his eyes to our faces as he approached us; but once, when the conversation flagged and he turned them full on me, I quailed beneath their steady, lustrous gaze.

“Paul,” I said, as we walked home, “I did so wish you would have asked Sir Edward about Lawrie. He might have remembered much to tell us if you had but begun the subject, which perhaps he did not like to introduce himself.”

"I could not mention his name to a stranger: it would not be right in me, if I could. You talk about Lawrence freely and often, as if you felt no shame in his death; but when you grow older, you will feel as I do, and shudder when you remember that he was a duellist."

Poor dead Lawrie! I felt as if it was some great moral want in me that prevented my blaming him as Paul did. To Paul a duel was murder in its most cold and wilful form. He seemed to forget the temptations to which Lawrence had been exposed, and the fact that he was the challenged — not the challenger; nay, sometimes it seemed as if he forgot that it was his own brother whom he so relentlessly condemned. I could only pity Lawrie goaded — as I felt he must have been, by false shame, and not by any unforgiving passion — to that last act which he had expiated with his life. But Paul, as I have said, felt differently. It hurt his pride of goodness that his brother should have died such a death. He hushed it up as much as he could; notwithstanding, the report spread through Lichendale that "young Mathewson had died far away across seas in a murdering-match;" and deep words of wrath against his murderer were mingled with regrets for my father; whose death, it was known, had been caused by the sudden sorrow. With whom Lawrence had fought, we did not know. No details had been given in the letter which my father had received; and Paul would never make inquiries, either as to the cause of the duel, or the name of the challenger; so that the suspicions which rested, with but little ground, on a French artist were never confirmed. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord," Paul would repeat to himself, half aloud, when-

ever people talked of the chance of discovering the unknown murderer; as if it gave him a kind of grim pleasure to remember into what Almighty hands he had yielded his cause. Surely, I thought, the Creator in his great goodness judges more mercifully than men judge.

CHAPTER III.

THE morning after our call, Paul was out, and I had gone up-stairs to get my hat for a stroll, when Jane came panting up the stairs, breathless with astonishment, for "Sir Edward was in the parlour!" What could he want?

"Did you tell him Mr. Paul was out, Jane?"

"Yes, Miss Helen; but he asked if you were in the house, and he comed in almost afore I'd time to answer yes."

He must have called on some urgent business, I thought; and I hurried down to him. His ride through the fresh morning air had flushed his cheeks, and he looked very handsome. His half-haughty, half-careless bearing impressed me as something strange and striking; it was so different from Paul's grave, slow manner.

"You must not think me an impertinent intruder, Miss Mathewson," he said, as I entered; "I bring my excuse in my pocket," and he tossed a note on to the table. "It is to beg you and your brother to dine with me to-morrow. I wrote it for the chance of your being out. There seems but little prospect of a dissolution, and time hangs heavily on my hands; so, if you and Mr. Mathewson will give me the pleasure of your society for to-morrow evening at least, I shall be quite delighted."

I felt that I ought to respond to this invitation with some very civil thanks; but the thought that came uppermost in my mind was of surprise at Sir Edward's want of occupation.

"All your tenants would be so glad to see you," I said, hesitatingly; "if you have so much spare time, I mean."

"Do you think they would?" replied Sir Edward, looking surprised at my daring to hint at his neglect of duty as a landlord. "I have always transacted business with them through my agent. Still, perhaps, they might care to see me, though I can't say the anxiety to meet is mutual. The farmers round Lichendale must be a very dull set of people. Can you tell me what character I bear here, Miss Mathewson? You must know my tenants well. Do those in the town, for instance, hold me very low in their righteous estimation, pray? Have reports unfavourable to me travelled from Italy?" he said, with a bitterness which a smile faintly concealed.

"I do not know if they love you at present; for it is difficult to love those one never sees. No! no! I don't mean that," I added quickly, thinking of Lawrie; "but it would be difficult for them to love one who has left them, and shown no interest in their welfare. I know that they are a good and grateful set of people, and that you might easily win their affection I am sure."

"I was thinking of their good esteem merely as regarded the probabilities of my being elected, if there should be a dissolution," said Sir Edward, earnestly; "but you make me feel ashamed of myself. I ought to consider it more as a proof of my having been a good landlord to them, and less as a means of my own success in life. I shall take your hint; meanwhile, I am con-

foundedly disappointed at Parliament having settled down again so quietly. I had quite worked myself up into a fever of imagination, at the thoughts of my contesting the election with Colonel Peterson."

"You left Rome on purpose to stand for Lichendale, did you not?"

"Yes," said Sir Edward, musingly, and his face brightened with some unspoken, sunny recollection of the Eternal City.

"Did you know my brother Lawrence there?" I asked quickly, for I was afraid of my courage failing me if I did not grasp at the first opportunity of asking the question which Paul had so strongly discountenanced.

"I met him many times," said Sir Edward, in a low, indistinct voice, starting from his reverie. His eyes were fastened on me — full of pity, I fancied; but I dared hardly meet them. He said little more and soon went away.

Oh! he, too, thinks like Paul, that Lawrence has sinned deeply; and would avoid the subject, I thought to myself, as I pondered over the visit; and I wondered if Sir Edward disliked me for mentioning Lawrence so shamelessly.

CHAPTER IV.

SIR EDWARD was like a flash of lightning striking across my quiet path. Everything in my daily life lost its brightness. We saw a good deal of him, and soon I began to feel those days which passed without meeting him, long and dreary. Each day I liked his face better; and the look of passion, that I had at first noticed in it, seemed, by degrees, to give place to one of

gentleness and kindness. Gradually, too, tales of recent kind deeds amongst his tenantry, took the place of the reports which had been rife in Lichendale before his return, of his dissipation at Rome. I sometimes wondered if my few words were the cause of his kindly intercourse with the poor people; but I checked myself quickly in this presumptuous supposition, and attributed the change to his natural good feeling. At any rate, it could hardly be to curry favour with his constituents; for, all chance of a speedy dissolution of Parliament seemed past.

He seemed, to my astonishment, to care to talk to me even more than to Paul, whose prejudice against him never quite wore off. Paul — if ever I ventured to express any of my boundless admiration for Sir Edward's wit or genius — checked me, and reminded me of all we had heard against his character.

"I can believe him passionate, Paul; but surely he is nothing worse."

"Passion is a fearful thing, Helena," Paul would reply; "and I believe Sir Edward to be selfish — more from habit than disposition perhaps; but still inexcusably selfish."

"He has had no motive for self-denial, most likely," I urged.

One beautiful evening — it was then the month of June — I set out to walk by a short cut through the park, to see a woman who was ill, and to whom I was taking some things. I hurried along; for I was late. Paul had set out some time before to the church, where there was service that evening, and I knew he would be vexed if I were not in time for it. I had got into a way of always looking out for Sir Edward; and, that

evening, although I had to walk quickly, I could not refrain from stopping every now and then to see if he was in sight. I met the curate hastening to the church. I quickened my steps, and determined not to stop again till I reached the cottage. Nothing startles one so much as the sudden fulfilment of some present dream that hope has conjured up. And, as I walked along, fancying what I should do and say if Sir Edward were to appear, I was startled by the well-known canter of his horse. My heart beat wildly. I thought it would have burst. The hoofs struck louder and louder on the grass, as the horse bounded towards me, but I did not turn round again. I longed to see if it really were Sir Edward, or whether I was mistaken; but I felt that I was scarlet, and I bent my head under my hat, and tried to hide my blushes. Sir Edward sprang from his horse, and stopped me. I do not know now exactly what he said. Even then I caught at its meaning from his face rather than heard his words; for my brain reeled — the trees seemed to rock, and the light to quiver and fade before my eyes. Faint and dizzy, I thought I must have fallen to the ground at his feet; but Sir Edward saw how white I grew, and passed his strong arm round me. I think he did not dislike my weakness; for as we stood there, he told me how, from his first look at my face he had liked me, and cared to see me again, and that he now loved me dearly, and wanted me to promise to be his wife. It was strange to me, and yet very sweet, to be spoken to with such loving tenderness. I brought back to my mind the days when I had my father and Lawrence to caress me; and, mistily, there uprose a dim remembrance of one, holding me tight in her dying grasp, pressing long, soft kisses on the little cheek she had wetted with

her tears; for, with such gentle words and ways as a mother might use to a frightened child, did Sir Edward strive to soothe me, till my faintness passed, and he had gained my answer.

The church bells stopped.

"I must go, Sir Edward, or Paul will be so vexed."

"You shall neither go to church, nor call me Sir Edward," he said, smiling; and detaining me with playful force, he made me sit down on a low ledge of rock that pierced the grass close by, cushioned with soft, purple thyme, and golden-starred money-wort. "Helena," he continued, his eyes pleading more earnestly than his words, "can you forgive the wild, wicked youth that I have spent? Will you strive to forget what I have been, and learn to think of me only as I now am: pardoning all that I have done wrong for the sake of my true, deep love?"

I did not answer. I hardly heard his last words. A sudden doubt had filled my mind, that cast a dark shadow across the sunshine of my happiness.

"When you ask me to be your wife, Sir Edward," I said, trying not to dread his answer, "do you remember the shame that Paul says attaches to our name? Do you remember that my youngest brother died in a duel?"

Sir Edward started.

"Those are your brother's rigid notions, Helena — very orthodox no doubt — but they are not mine. In this peaceful place, perhaps, duelling seems a terrible thing; but it is nonsense of Mr. Mathewson to talk of it so. No stain inflicted on your name from that — though if it did — still I would marry you."

"I have always thought Paul judged Lawrie too harshly," I said, "and I am glad you think the same."

Did you first like my face because it reminded you of Lawrence's, Sir Edward?"

Sir Edward answered me with a gay laugh; but his voice trembled.

I wished the church bells to ring again, with their peaceful, booming sound. There seemed something half unholy in the light, careless way in which he had spoken of duelling; although intended to quiet my doubts. It felt to me — yes! I am sure that it is not my present fancy — it felt to me at that moment, as if Lawrence stood unseen between me and Sir Edward. The wind, chill and damp, rustled through the trees, with a dreary, shuddering sound. Sir Edward rose, and walked apart for a few minutes.

"Go home, dear little Helena," he said, at length; "I shall come and see your brother to-morrow."

I got home quickly, and sat in the twilight waiting for Paul.

CHAPTER V.

I HAD half feared that Paul might refuse his consent to our engagement; but I was mistaken. His opinion of Sir Edward had that very day been greatly improved by something he had heard in the town — some kind or honourable deed, I forget exactly what; and, with many admonitions as to my future conduct, and not a few re-proofs for past misdemeanours, he gave a slow, solemn consent.

The few weeks of my engagement were perfect happiness to me. Before, I had had no one to sympathise with me in all my daily joys and sorrows, or in my deeper feelings; but now, Edward would listen with un-

tiring patience and ready sympathy to anything that came into my head. Only about Lawrence I never talked to him. Paul's opinions — although I could not accept them — had yet sufficient power, by their firm persistency, to shake my confidence in my own; and I dreaded lest Edward's pride should ever turn and rebel at the remembrance of what Paul called our tarnished name, and felt glad that Sir Edward himself never alluded to the subject, of which I feared to remind him. Paul's grave, sullen manners hardly vexed me now; for I knew it was but to bear with them for an hour or so, and that in the next Edward would be at my side. He awoke my interest in a thousand new things. To be his fit companion, I felt I must read books which I had never even seen, and these he gladly lent me from the library at the Hall. One day when I was there, and he was hunting up some volume for me, my eye was attracted to a drawer which was partly open. I looked into it. It was full of beautiful gems, delicate enamels, and mosaics, that he had brought from Italy; and, in the furthest corner, glittering in the darkness, lay some quaintly carved pistols.

"Shut that drawer, Helena!" said Sir Edward, fiercely, turning round suddenly, and seeing where I stood.

I obeyed, and laughingly asked if it was a second Blue Beard's cupboard. But I got no answer, and when I looked round, Sir Edward was fixedly watching me, all colour gone from his cheeks — all tenderness from his eyes.

Did you again stand between and part us, Lawrence?

Edward had promised to walk with me on the sands, on the evening of the day but one before that fixed for my wedding. I was punctual to my appointment. The

stable clock at the Hall rung out eight as I reached the bridge which, crossing the river, leads into the park, and which was our usual trysting-place; but no Edward was there. I waited till nine o'clock, and then, frightened at his not coming, ran to the Hall with beating heart and dark misgivings.

Sir Edward was in the library, but very busy, the servant said, in answer to my inquiry. He could not be too busy to see me, I thought, so I heeded not what else the man said, but went quickly to the library.

"Colonel Peterson is dead!" said Sir Edward eagerly when I burst into the room. "I am sorry I have broken my appointment, but these gentlemen," and he bowed to two whom I recognised as leading people in our little town, "have already honoured me with a request that I shall supply his place. You had better go home now."

I felt sad as I walked home. It was wrong, however, I know, to mind that Sir Edward seemed engrossed in this sudden prospect of entering the political field, where he longed to distinguish himself; and I made many resolutions not to think of my own claims, or to mind how I, for a while, might be discarded.

Our marriage was put off. Sir Edward was fully occupied with the chances of his election. Paul went up to London, and I begged him not to hasten home; for I determined to conquer the old feeling of loneliness which was creeping over me, and not to own its power by requiring him as a companion. Two or three days after he had left me, I was sitting in the evening reading in the drawing-room. The morning of that day had been sunny and bright; but, in the evening, a heavy, grey mist had closed round the dale, and sad feelings of depression had come over me. Edward had been only

once to see me in my solitude; and, in that short visit, he had seemed abstracted and half-longing to be gone. I knew that, fair as his chance was, there was yet need for exertion, as two other candidates had come forward. I knew that he was much occupied; still it was difficult to keep my resolution of not minding how much he might seem to neglect me. The wind and rain sounded so dreary, and my heart was so heavy, that at length I buried my face in my hands and sobbed.

CHAPTER VI.

A RING at the door startled me. I wiped away my tears. It must be Edward. How hasty and unjust I had been! I rose to meet him, but instead of Edward I saw Paul. "Helena," he said, before I had even time to exclaim at his sudden appearance, or almost to notice his wet, disordered dress, "I have heard some dreadful news in London, and I have hastened straight home to tell you it — to warn and save you."

"Oh! tell me quickly, Paul," I gasped; "what is it? Do not stop to break it to me, but tell me. Anything is better than suspense."

"Bear it bravely then, Helena," he said; but he himself was pale and trembling, and as he continued, his voice sunk to a low, hoarse whisper, — "Sir Edward Stamford is Lawrence's murderer."

I uttered a fierce contradiction; and I felt defiantly indignant.

"Alas, Helena!" said Paul, "the person who told me — a Signor Corti — stood beside Lawrence as his second in the duel; but had promised him, as he lay dying, never to reveal by whose hand he fell; for the

challenge had been tauntingly given, and the offence pitilessly avenged. The quarrel arose about some girl they both admired — a Miss Graham — and Lawrence knew, I suppose, what shame would clog his adversary's steps were his crime known."

"Yes, Lawrence's generosity would be true till death," I broke in, "but, oh! that man must be deceiving us; it cannot be Sir Edward who has done this cruel deed."

"He showed me the letter, Helena, in which Lawrence asked him to be his second, and in which Sir Edward's name was mentioned. Nay, he had even the pistols with him in London, which had been Sir Edward's, and bore his crest and initials, for they had changed weapons before fighting. Lawrence's must be in Sir Edward's possession, no doubt; they were that clumsy old pair that my father had mended up for him."

"I have seen them," I said. Alas! I could no longer doubt Paul's statement; for, with fearful distinctness, the scene in the Hall-library flashed back upon my mind — the open drawer, the bright pistols, Sir Edward's face, rigid and white with alarm — and I wondered how even my trustful love could have blinded me to the truth for so long.

"Corti would never have broken his promise, Helena, if it had not been necessary to do so, to save you from marrying your brother's murderer. Report had told him what you were about to do."

"To save me from it," Paul, I exclaimed, "what do you mean?"

"Is it possible, you misunderstand me?" he said. "I mean that your duty and your natural affection ought to strengthen you to renounce Sir Edward. I can hardly

believe that you will find it a difficult task," he added, bitterly, "not to love your brother's murderer."

"I cannot take back my love, Paul. I never gave it for any definite reason; it was sent like some blessed instinct, and now, though I shudder to think what he is, I cannot — cannot part from Edward. It may be wicked and unnatural of me; but I cannot!" Paul groaned aloud with horror. "Why did I ever allow this engagement?" he muttered to himself.

"Only think of the terrible remorse he must have suffered, dear Paul," I pleaded, trying to be calm.

"I cannot count, Helena, his so cruelly deceiving you, as remorse. No: you must and shall break off this engagement. His guilt has cancelled any promise you can have made him."

"I am stronger-hearted than I seem," I said; "and, although the whole world cry out and condemn me, I will stand by him, comforting him, and strengthening him to a right repentance. I know you can tear and keep me away now; but, when I am of age, I will spring free from you and return to Sir Edward."

I stood there firm and resolute. A deep pain was at my heart, and terror struggled with my love; but still it lived imperiously strong, bound up, as it seemed, with my life. Paul was silent.

"Good night," I said, and moved towards the door.

He detained me by the arm.

"Hear!" he said, and his voice was cruelly calm, "the determination to which your obstinacy forces me; and from which no earthly power shall make me flinch. If you persist in your refusal to break off with Sir Edward, I will make known his guilt in every home around. No child but shall point at him, and cry,

‘Murderer!’ no mother but shall pray that her daughter may not live to love like you. Do you think, Helena, that the people of Lichendale will then choose him, his name blood-stained and blackened, for their representative? They will not — they shall not — if my words have power to move them. Murderer — deceiver as he is, what should it matter to him who has lost heaven, if this chance of earthly success escape him? I place it in your power to prevent this: make your choice.”

CHAPTER VII.

I STAGGERED up to my own room, and threw myself on the bed. I lay sobbing in the darkness till Paul heard me, and came to me. I would not listen to him; but turned away with angry dread. When he had left me, I rose from my bed, went to the open window, and, leaning out, strove to see through black vacancy the Hall, where Sir Edward was sleeping, ignorant of my wild despair. The night-air cooled my burning cheeks, and the peaceful silence, only broken by the roar of the distant tide, stilled my passionate grief. I knelt down and prayed. I prayed that my love might be unselfish, and that I might, if necessary, be strong enough to sacrifice my own happiness to his.

Slowly but surely the conviction stole upon me that, to do right, I must give him up. I tried to resist it. I grappled with it; but in vain. It mastered me. The impetuosity of his love had been trampled down by his ambition. I did not love him the less for this. It merely made me long that, when his ambition was gratified, I might be taught how to win back his first great love. Paul had acted with cruel and unerring foresight, when

he had made the alternative of my refusing to give up Sir Edward the almost certain loss of his election, and he had rightly guessed the conclusion I should work out in my own mind. For I felt that Sir Edward, triumphant in his election, and carried by it into new scenes and society, would soon forget me, and any pain resigning me might at first cost him.

The dawn crept slowly on, and the great white lilies, that I had planted out in the garden to make it gay for Paul when I should be gone, grew into distinctness, pointing with their golden fingers towards heaven. I still knelt by the window, praying that I might not shrink from the sacrifice.

What Sir Edward answered, when Paul wrote to him to tell him of my determination to break off the engagement, I was never told exactly; but I fancy his reply consisted chiefly of thanks for the assurance, which I had made Paul promise to give, that his secret should not escape through us. I had asked Paul to write, because I could not have borne to do so without giving any explanation, and the only true one would have bound Sir Edward in honour to hold to his engagement.

For several days after that terrible night I lay in a death-like stupor. The merry church-bells woke me from it.

"Is it my wedding-day to-day?" I asked, as I sickened back into half-consciousness.

"Oh, Miss Helena!" said Jane, who had watched with Paul by me, "I am right glad to hear your voice again. It's no wedding. The bells are ringing for Sir Edward — Sir Edward, Miss." — She guessed rightly that name would rouse me. "He's won the election, and he's given the ringers a power o' money."

A flood of recollection was let loose. It was all too true! I turned my face to the wall — I wept bitter tears. "Oh! that I had a mother to comfort me."

CHAPTER VIII.

THREE years passed. As soon as I recovered from my illness I resumed my household duties. I even went out in the town, after I heard of Sir Edward's departure for London; for I knew that the longer it was deferred the more painful would it be to me to revisit the places which his presence had made so dear. I strove hard to conquer my grief. In the daytime, by constant occupation, to which I forced myself, I contrived to drive it from me; but, at night, when I was alone, it sprang from its hiding-place, like some horrid spectre, and stared me in the face with relentless eyes. Sir Edward seldom came to Lichendale, and, during these rare visits, I never left the house. His career in public was brilliant. Had I not paid for it dearly? Even in his absence he continued to do much good amongst his poorer tenants; and if ever, by chance, they forgot my past history and in my visits named him to me, it was with love and respect for his character. If, instead of receiving this approbation, he had been branded and condemned by the world, would he not have sunk in his own self-respect, and have verified the unjustly harsh opinion of the public?

My love for him never wavered. The recollection of those few happy weeks when I had been his, gradually became more and more dream-like; but my love continued unquenched. For many months Paul and I led a life of silent antagonism. Although I tried to forgive,

I could not forget what he had done, and I do not think I considered enough how little he had ever understood, or even been capable of understanding, my devotion to Sir Edward, or how much of his childish experiences had been calculated to increase his naturally harsh, unforgiving disposition. Hannah, loving Lawrence the most for his little winsome, sportful ways, had often unknowingly checked Paul's affectionate impulses. Once as I watched him reading, and noticed the lines of care and thought deepening on his face, I was startled into a painful consciousness of what a loveless life we led; only brother and sister to each other as we were. I was humbled by my sorrow, and I did not repress the thought that perhaps it was my fault for always striving and chafing against his will, instead of showing him a loving submission. With a sudden impulse I sprang up, and flung my arms round his neck. "I do love you, Paul," I murmured, "I really do." I feared he might put me coldly from him. I felt half ashamed that I had not restrained myself; but his low, "God bless you for this, Helena," dispelled all doubts, and thrilled me with joy. Those few words seemed to draw us closer together than I could once have deemed possible; and I strove my utmost to hold fast what I had gained by them.

CHAPTER IX.

ONE day I was returning slowly home, after a morning spent at the school, when I saw the doctor rush past me without a nod or word of recognition. A servant followed him, hot and out of breath. I glanced at the livery — it was Sir Edward's!

"Who is ill at the Hall?" I asked. The man, a

stranger to me, stared at me; for, I suppose, I looked wild and eager.

"Sir Edward," he said, "he's got a fever. I told him last night he had better have the doctor, but he wouldn't listen to me, and now he'll want the doctor and the parson both."

Terror seemed to give me strength. I got to the Hall without stopping to think. I opened a side-door that I knew was left unlocked, and sprang up the wide stairs, and on — on — into Sir Edward's presence. A wild, ringing laugh greeted me —

"Ha! Helena!" he screamed in his delirium, "is that you? and where is Lawrence? — poor, bleeding Lawrence!" His eyes glared with fever.

Paul stood at the bedside; brought there, face to face with his enemy, by a summons which he had not dared to disobey — a summons to give spiritual peace and comfort to one, who, the messenger had said, lay at the point of death. He saw me as I entered; but he did not send me away. The past was forgotten in that awful present.

Long, weary days of watching followed. Out-of-doors, I remember, everything was so bright and joyous in the summer-weather. All day the belling of the deer, and the low, sweet notes of birds calling to each other, came floating through the open window into the darkened room; and I could hear, too, the people passing through the park laughing gaily in the sunshine. It seemed as if the full measure of my misery, beneath the weight of which I thought my heart must surely break, were but a little drop of sorrow in the great stream of glad life, that eddied sparkling on, untroubled, unpitying. It was terrible to see Sir Edward suffer, and to be able to give

him no relief: to hear him shriek in his delirium like one tormented, and have no power to soothe. Lawrence's death-scene seemed to haunt him like a ghastly vision. He mentioned his name perpetually, in rapid, incoherent sentences, that were sometimes half-Italian, and of which I could only guess the sad meaning. Often his voice sank to a low moaning for Helena; but, when I came forward and spoke to him — hoping that as at first he would recognise me — he shrunk shuddering away with shut eyes, seeing in me only my likeness to Lawrence; whose face, as he last looked upon it, was not, I think, more white and wild than mine became in those hours of misery.

It was during the second night of our watching that the physician, for whom Paul had telegraphed from London, arrived. I heard the hoarse grating of the carriage-wheels over the gravel. I knew that he was come, and with him, I hardly doubted, relief for Sir Edward. He came up-stairs immediately, and entered the room with a quiet, cautious tread. I could hardly bear the suspense of those moments. I crept out into the dark ante-room, and stood there straining with expectation, and vainly trying to forget that it was for a verdict of life or death that I waited. Sir Edward's great dog left the side of the door, where he had lain ever since his master had been taken ill, and came to me with a strange, piteous whine.

At length the physician left the patient's room, and Paul followed him, pressing him for an opinion. They did not see me standing there in the faint moonlight, and I was too anxious, too eager, to move; so they spoke out the cruel truth plainly, and I drank in their

words as some poor creature mad with thirst, might snatch and swallow poison.

"Did you say there was no hope?" said Paul. My breath came and went quick.

"Not a shadow," the physician replied; "I do not see a chance of recovery with that pulse, and I am not apt to give up a case. You haven't gained much by bringing me down here, you see," he added, lightly, as he and Paul passed on into the gallery.

I tried to go towards the room; but my strength failed. I sank to the ground like one paralysed. As I crouched there, in the darkness, I heard my name loaded with reproaches. In delirious anguish my faithlessness was denounced for killing its victim, and, in that manner, avenging Lawrence. These reproaches had enough of terrible sense in them to sound more than mere ravings. But, through the tumult of my grief, holy words of promise rose to my remembrance — "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." I raised my hands in an agony of supplication, and prayed for Edward's recovery with intense longing.

I do not know why I longed for it so earnestly, remembering always as I did that when he got well I must leave him. I suppose I had unconsciously some expectation that, if he lived, he would in some way learn how true I had been to him; and, before death, give me one word or look of gratitude. I rose, strengthened and comforted, and went to him.

The crisis of the fever passed. Sir Edward's strength had been spent in the fury of his delirium, and he lay prostrate and weak as a little child; but he lived, my prayers were heard. Death had hovered very near; but at His commands, he spread his black pinions

and fled. I watched on day and night by Sir Edward till he was out of danger, and his consciousness returned. Then Paul bade me go home, and there was a gentle pity in his voice that filled my heart with a new hope.

He still stayed at the Hall, nursing Sir Edward. Twice or three times every day he sent me short bulletins; and, on the expectation of these, I seemed to live. Each day Sir Edward was getting better. Each day I felt sure that Paul's heart was softening towards him, and yearning more and more to proffer forgiveness. One day (it was more than a week after the crisis) Paul's note was longer than it had ever been before.

"I have told Sir Edward everything — my threat which Heaven has taught me to repent, and your sacrifice. His joy when I told him why you had parted from him, was so great that I was quite afraid lest its effects should throw him back. I must tell you what he says; for, at present it would be dangerous for him to see you. He declares, that I was quite deceived in thinking that he felt no remorse in meeting us; and that it was only from a strong desire to make every reparation in his power, that, by giving me this living, he insured our home so near his. He says, that he had a shuddering reluctance to meet those whom he had so deeply injured; but that, directly he had seen you, he felt it impossible to stop his intercourse with us. He blames himself bitterly for the sorrow he has caused you by the cowardly concealment of his crime when he engaged himself to you. When he heard of your determination to part from him, he naturally concluded that it resulted from indignation at his conduct, with which I had told him we were acquainted. But he now knows how it all was. He says, that ever since then he has been making most earnest efforts to subdue the passionate heat of temper which drove him to his crime; but that he had determined not to plead for your forgiveness till he could prove, by his having conquered his evil disposition, that he had striven hard to earn it. These are nearly his words. I believe that he meant to have seen you, to tell you all this himself, during this visit to Lichendale; and that his anxiety as to your answer, in great measure, brought on the fever. His repentance has been bitter; but a day of gladness has dawned. — Yours, P. M "

My tears fell fast and thick as I finished the letter, but through them I saw Lawrence's eyes shining from

his portrait on the wall, — bright and glad, and it seemed to me as if his spirit spoke through them, rejoicing with me, and sanctioning my perfect happiness.

“Helena,” said Sir Edward to me the other day, “miserable as those three years were, even if it were possible, I would not have them undone. They taught me how precious you were; and, in striving to win you back, my love for you helped me to overcome evil in many a fierce conflict.”

“That time has done us all good,” I said. “It made Paul and me love each other, as we should never otherwise have done. I see now how sorrow is sent with divinely merciful purposes.”

“O baby, baby,” said Edward, catching up our little girl from the floor, “we will never let you marry such a wicked man as Sir Edward Stamford, though mamma has done so, — will we?”

AGNES LEE.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. WARREN was a charming woman — as like the popular notion of a perfect angel as anybody could hope to find, if they took the longest summer day for the search. She was an Irishwoman, the widow of an English gentleman of large fortune, who had left her endowed with an ample jointure and a handsome manor-house in Staffordshire. She was young, bright, fascinating, and thoroughly good-natured; she enjoyed nothing so much as making people happy, and would sacrifice her own pleasure or convenience even, for an entire stranger, provided the necessities of the case had been brought before her with sufficient eloquence or emphasis. She did everything in the easiest and most graceful manner, and had the virtue of forgetting all about it herself, as soon as the occasion had passed away. She was devoted to her friends, and loved them dearly, so long as they were there to assist themselves; but, if they went away, she never thought of them till the next time she saw them, when she was again as fond of them as ever. With all her generosity, however, her tradespeople complained that she did not pay her bills; that she did very shabby things, and that she drove dreadfully hard bargains. A poor woman whom she had

employed to do some plain work, declared contemptuously that she would sooner work for Jews than for charitable ladies: they screwed down so in the price, and kept folks waiting so long for their money.

It was not difficult for Mrs. Warren to be an angel: she had no domestic discipline to test her virtues too severely, nor to ruffle the bird of paradise beauty of her wings. Husbands are daily stumbling-blocks in the path of female perfection; they have the faculty of taking the shine out of the most dazzling appearances. It is easier to be an angel than to be an average good woman under domestic difficulties.

Mrs. Huxley was the wife of the hard-working clergyman in whose parish Mrs. Warren's manor-house was situated. She had a cross husband, who did not adore her, but who (chiefly from the force of habit) found fault with everything she did; nothing but the purest gold could have stood the constant outpouring of so much sulphuric acid. Yet Mrs. Huxley went on in the even tenor of her way, struggling with straitened means, delicate health, recurring washing-days, and her husband's temper. Her economical feebleness, and the difficulties of keeping her weekly bills in a state of liquidation, were greatly complicated in consequence of all the poor people in the parish coming to her as to a sort of earthly Providence, to supply all they lacked in the shape of food, physic, raiment, and good advice. Strangers said that Mrs. Huxley looked fretful, and that it was a pity a clergyman's wife should have such unattractive manners; that it must be a trial so such a pleasant genial man as her husband to have a partner so unlike himself, and all that. The recording angel might

have given a different verdict; the poor of her parish knew her value.

The family at the Rectory consisted of one daughter, named Miriam, and an orphan niece of Mr. Huxley's, whom they had adopted. Mr. Huxley had made many difficulties when this plan was first proposed. He objected to the expense, and wished the girl to be sent as an articled pupil to some cheap school, where she might qualify herself to become a nursery governess, or to wait on young ladies. This he said on the plea that, as they would not be able to give her any fortune, it would be cruel to give her a taste for comforts she could not hereafter expect; that it was best to accustom her betimes to the hardships of her lot. Mrs. Huxley did not often contradict her husband; but, on this occasion, she exerted her powers of speech; she was a mother, and acted as she would have wished another to act by her own Miriam. Mr. Huxley graciously allowed himself to be persuaded, and Agnes Lee, the child of his favourite sister, was adopted into the Rectory nursery on a perfect equality with her cousin. It somehow got to be reported abroad, that Mrs. Huxley had greatly opposed her husband's generosity, and had wished the little orphan to be sent to the workhouse.

The two children grew up together, and were as fond of each other as sisters usually are; but Agnes Lee had the strongest will and the most energy. So it was she who settled the plays and polity of doll-land, and who took the lead in all matters of "books, and work, and needle-play." Agnes was twelve, and Miriam fourteen, when the fascinating Mrs. Warren came to live at the Great-House.

She took up the Rectory people most warmly, and

threw herself with enthusiasm into all manner of benevolent schemes for the benefit of the parish. To the two girls she seemed like a good fairy. She had them constantly to her beautiful house, she gave them lessons in singing, and taught them to dance; her French maid manufactured their bonnets and dresses; she lavished gifts upon them, she made pets of them, and was never weary of inventing schemes for giving them pleasure. It was delightful to see their enjoyment and to receive their gratitude, and she never suspected the delicate unobtrusive care with which poor cold, stiff, Mrs. Huxley contrived that the two girls should never fall too heavily upon the hands of their beautiful patroness. She also tried to inspire them with a portion of her own reserve; but that was not so easy. Miriam — a mild, shy, undemonstrative girl — felt an admiration of Mrs. Warren that approached to idolatry. It took the place of a first love. Mrs. Warren liked the excitement of being loved with enthusiasm; but she never calculated the responsibility it brought along with it, and omitted nothing that could stimulate Miriam's passionate attachment. Agnes was less impressionable. She had a precocious amount of common sense, and Mrs. Warren's fascinations did not take too much hold upon her. The Rector was almost as much bewitched as his daughter by the fair widow. She talked gaily to him, and obliged him to rub up his ancient gallantry, which had fallen into rusty disuse. She dressed all the children of his school in green gowns and red ribbons. She subscribed a painted window to the church. She talked over two refractory churchwardens, who had been the torment of his life: above all, she admired his sermons; and, as she was in correspondence with a lord bishop, he had san-

guine hopes that her admiration might lead to something better. Mrs. Huxley was the only person who refused to be charmed. She did not contradict the raptures expressed by her husband and daughter, but she heard them in silence.

When Miriam was sixteen, she fell into delicate health; a slight accident developed a spinal affection. A London physician, who with his wife was on a short visit to Mrs. Warren, saw Miriam at her request, and gave little hope that she would ever be anything but a life-long invalid. She was ordered to keep as much as possible in a recumbent position. Mrs. Warren was on the point of departing for London. Nothing could exceed her sympathy and generosity. At first she declared she would postpone her journey, to assist Mrs. Huxley to nurse her sweet Miriam; but she easily gave up that idea when Mrs. Huxley declared, rather dryly, "that there was not the least occasion; for, as the case was likely to be tedious, it was better to begin as they could go on." Mrs. Warren, however, loaded Miriam with presents. She made Miriam promise to write to her all she read and thought; and, for this purpose, she gave her a supply of fairy-like paper and a gold pen. Miriam, on her side, promised to write twice a-week at least, and to tell Mrs. Warren everything that could amuse her. Mrs. Warren gave orders to her gardener to supply the Rectory with fruit, flowers, and vegetables; but either Mrs. Warren's directions were not clear, or the gardener did not choose to act upon them. He charged for everything that he sent down, and gave as his reason that his mistress paid him no wages in her absence, but let him pick up what he could.

After Mrs. Warren's departure, she wrote for a month;

after that, her letters ceased. Newspapers supplied their place; and, it appeared from the notices of fashionable life, that Mrs. Warren had taken her place amongst the gayest. At last the newspapers ceased; the last that came contained the announcement that Mrs. Warren had left town for Paris. After this, no more news reached the Rectory. The Manor House remained shut up, and the lodge-keeper said "that the Missis was spending the winter at Bath."

At first Miriam wrote in all the enthusiasm and good faith of youthful adoration. Mrs. Warren had begged she would not count with her letter for letter, but have trust in her unalterable attachment, &c., &c.; and Miriam went on writing, long after all answers had ceased. Everything earthly has its limit; and, when reciprocity is all on one side, the term is reached rather earlier than it might otherwise have been. Poor Miriam lay on her couch, and went through all the heart-sickening process of disenchantment about the friendship which she had made the light of her life. She rejoiced moodily in her physical sufferings, and hoped that she should soon die, as she could not endure such misery long. The young believe in the eternity of all they feel.

She was roused from this sorrow of sentiment by a real affliction. Scarlet fever broke out in the parish. Mr. Huxley caught it, and died, after a fortnight's illness. A life insurance for a thousand pounds, and a few hundreds painfully saved and laid by in the Bank of England, was all the provision that remained to his family.

A fortnight after the funeral, Mrs. Huxley and Agnes were sitting sadly before the fire, which had burned low,

on a dull, chill November evening. Miriam lay on her couch, and could scarcely be discerned in the deepening shadow. The dusk was gathering thick, the curtains were not drawn; both without and within, the world looked equally desolate to these three women. The silence was broken only by the sighs of poor Mrs. Huxley; the dull firelight showed her widow's cap, and the glaze of tears upon her pale clay-like cheeks. At length Agnes roused herself. She had taken the lead in the house since the family troubles, and now moved briskly about the room, endeavouring to impart something like comfort. She replenished the fire, trimmed the lamp; and made the old servant bring in tea.

Agnes threw in an extra spoonful of green, spread a tempting slice of toast, and placed a small table between Mrs. Huxley and Miriam, who both began insensibly to be influenced by the change she had produced. When tea was over, they became almost cheerful. After tea, Mrs. Huxley took out her knitting, and Agnes brought out her work-basket.

"Now listen, dear aunt; for I have schemed a scheme, which only needs your approval."

"That will go a very little way towards doing good," sighed Mrs. Huxley.

"Oh, it will go further than you think!" said Agnes, cheerfully. "I was up at the Green this morning, and I heard that Sam Blacksmith is going to leave his cottage for another that is nearer to his smithy. It struck me that the one he is leaving would just suit you, and Miriam, and old Mary. There is a garden; and the cottage in your hands will be charming. This furniture will look to more advantage there than it does here;

and, when I have seen you comfortably settled, I shall leave you, to seek my fortune."

"My dear, you are so rash, and you talk so fast, I don't hear one word you say," said Mrs. Huxley, querulously.

"I was talking, aunt, about a cottage I had seen this morning," said Agnes, gently. "I thought it would just suit us."

"I am sure I shall not like it. It will have stone floors, which will not do for Miriam. You talk so wildly of going to seek your fortune. I am sure I don't know what is to become of us. You are so sanguine: no good ever comes of it. You were all so set up with Mrs. Warren, and you see what came of it."

"Well, aunt, my belief is, that Mrs. Warren would be as good as ever, if she only saw us; but she cannot recollect people out of sight."

"She loves flattery, and she likes fresh people," said Miriam, bitterly.

Agnes went to the piano, and began to play some old hymn tunes very softly.

"Agnes, my dear, I cannot bear music. Do come back and sit still," said her aunt.

The next morning Agnes persuaded her aunt to go with her to the Green, to look at the cottage; and, after some objections, Mrs. Huxley agreed that it might be made to do.

Whilst making arrangements for the removal, Agnes thought seriously how she was to obtain a situation of some kind, and anxiously examined what she was qualified to undertake. She knew that she had only herself to depend upon. A few days afterwards the postman brought a letter with a foreign postmark. It was Mrs.

Warren's handwriting. Agnes bounded with it into the parlour, exclaiming, "See! who was right about Mrs. Warren? It is for you."

Miriam turned aside her head. Mrs. Huxley put on her spectacles; and, after turning the letter over half-a-dozen times, opened it. A bank-note for twenty pounds fell out. She had just seen the mention of Mr. Huxley's death, and wrote on the spur of the moment. She was full of self-reproach for her neglect; begged them to believe she loved them as much as ever; spoke of Miriam with great kindness, but without any speciality; begged to be informed of their plans for the future; and, in a hasty postscript, said, that the enclosure was towards erecting a tablet to the memory of her dear friend, or for any other purpose they preferred.

Nothing could be kinder or more delicate; but Miriam was nearly choked with bitter feelings. The letter showed her how completely she had faded away from Mrs. Warren's affection. She vehemently urged her mother and cousin to send back the money.

Agnes undertook to answer the letter; which she did with great judgment. Even Miriam was satisfied. She mentioned her own desire to find a situation as preparatory governess, and asked Mrs. Warren if she had it in her power to recommend her.

As soon as could reasonably be expected, the answer came, addressed to Mrs. Huxley, begging that Agnes might at once join the writer in Paris, where, she had not the least doubt, she would be able to place her advantageously. Minute directions were given for the journey. On arriving in Paris, Agnes was to proceed at once to the Hotel Raymond, where Mrs. Warren was staying.

"How kind! how very kind!" exclaimed Agnes. "You see her heart is in the right place after all!"

"It is certainly very kind; but I do not like you to take so long a journey alone, you are too young. I cannot feel it either right or prudent," said Mrs. Huxley.

"My dear Agnes," said Miriam, "you shall not be trusted to the mercy of that woman. She cares for nothing but excitement. She has no notion of obligation, and will be as likely as not to have left Paris by the time you arrive, if the fancy has taken her for visiting Egypt or Mexico. I know what she is, and you shall not go."

"My dear aunt, as I am to make my own way in the world, the sooner I begin the better. I am to take charge of others, and I must learn to take care of myself. My dear Miriam, you are unjust. I place very little dependence on the stability of Mrs. Warren's emotions; but she always likes people when they are with her. It is an opening I am not likely to have again, and the sooner I avail myself of it the better."

"Agnes, be warned, I entreat you. No good will ever come out of that woman's random benefits. They are no better than snares. Have nothing to do with her."

Agnes would not be warned. She wished to go out into the world, to make her own way. She had no fears for herself. She argued and persuaded, and at last her aunt consented. Miriam was over-ruled, and a grateful acceptance was written to Mrs. Warren, fixing that day three weeks for her departure.

"The die is cast now!" said Agnes, when she returned from carrying the letter to the post. "I wonder what my future lot will be!"

CHAPTER II.

THE diligence rolled heavily into the Court of the Messagerie Royale in Paris, towards the middle of a keen bright day in the last week of December. A fair, elegant English girl, in deep mourning, looked anxiously out of the window of the coupé, in search of some one to claim her.

"Is there any one waiting for you, Ma'mselle?" asked the good-natured conductor. "Will it please you to alight?"

"I see no one," said Agnes, who was bewildered with the noise and bustle. "I must have a coach to go to this address, please."

"Mrs. Warren, Hotel Raymond," read the conductor, looking at her keenly. "You want to go there, do you? Well, I will see. Your friends ought not to have left you to arrive alone. But the English are so droll!"

In a few minutes he returned.

"Now, Ma'mselle, here is a coach. The driver is my friend; he will see you safe. You may trust him. I would go with you myself, but —"

"You have been very kind to me," said Agnes, gratefully. Her command of French was very limited, and she said this in English; but the look that accompanied it spoke the language which needs no interpreter.

"Pardon. No thanks; it is my duty. Ma'mselle is too generous! There is no occasion." And the gallant conductor put back the five-franc piece that Agnes tendered with some embarrassment; for, during the journey he had shown her kindness that she felt could not be repaid in money. She took from her purse a

half-crown piece English money. This the conductor put into his left waistcoat-pocket, as he said "for a remembrance of Ma'mselle."

The hackney-coach soon arrived at Raymond's. A grand-looking servant came to the door of the coach, and inquired her pleasure, with an elaborate politeness that would have been overwhelming at any other time; but Agnes scarcely noticed him. She eagerly handed him Mrs. Warren's card; but what little French she could command had entirely departed, and she could not utter a word. The garçon took the card, looked at it with a slight gesture of surprise, and returned to the house. In the meantime the coachman dismounted, took down the modest luggage, and demanded his fare. Agnes alighted, gave the man what he asked, and he had just driven away, when the garçon returned, accompanied by another.

"Ma'mselle is under a meestake," said the new comer, who evidently believed that he spoke English like a native. "Madame Warren is no more here — she departed two days since for Marseilles."

Agnes looked stupidly at him. She had heard what he said perfectly, and she was quite calm; but it was the calmness that makes the heart stand still, and turns the life within to stone.

"She told me to come here. She knew I was to come." Agnes spoke with stiffened lips and a voice that did not seem her own.

"She may have left some message — some letter for Ma'mselle," suggested the first garçon. "I will inquire."

Agnes sat down upon her trunk. She felt convinced that Mrs. Warren had gone and left no directions about her. She had just five francs and half a guinea left of

money. Her position presented itself to her with perfect lucidity; but she felt no alarm, only a horrible stillness and paralysis of all emotion.

The garçon returned: he had a letter in his hand. Madame Warren had departed for Marseilles, en route for Sicily. She had left no message or direction. That letter had arrived a few hours after her departure, but they did not know where to forward it.

Agnes looked at the letter. It was her own, stating the time she would arrive in Paris, and requesting to be met. She gave it back to the garçon without speaking, and rested her head dreamily and wearily upon her hand.

The sight of a young and extremely pretty English girl in deep mourning and sitting upon her trunk, had by this time attracted a group of curious spectators. The fate of Agnes Lee was trembling in the balance. Already, a man, no longer young, who had lost his front teeth, and who looked as if he had no bones in his body, and a woman with a hard, insolent, determined face, varnished with cajolery, approached her. The woman addressed her in passably good English, but Agnes seemed not to hear. At this crisis a grave, middle-aged man made his way from the street. He looked round with surprise at the persons crowding in the court, and his eye fell on Agnes. He went up to her. The man and woman both shrank back from his glance.

"What is the meaning of all this, my child? How came you here, and what do you want?"

He spoke with a certain benevolent austerity. His tone roused Agnes; she looked up and passed her hand in a bewildered way over her forehead; but she could

not recollect or explain her story. Mechanically she gave him Mrs. Warren's letter directing her to the Hotel Raymond, and looked acutely at him as his eye glanced over it.

"My poor child, you cannot remain here. They ought not to have left you here for a moment. You must come in and speak to my wife. We will see what can be done."

The loiterers dispersed — the new-comer was the proprietor of the hotel. Desiring a porter to take up her trunk, he led her into a private office, where a pleasant looking woman of about forty sat at a desk surrounded by account-books and ledgers. She looked up from her writing as they entered. He spoke to her in a low voice, and gave her the letter to read.

"Mais c'est une infamie!" said she, vehemently, when she had read it. "You have done well to bring her in — it was worthy of you, my friend. Heavens! she is stupefied with cold and fear!"

Agnes stood still, apparently unconscious of what was passing; she heard, but she could give no sign. At length sight and sound became confused, and she fell.

When she recovered, she was lying in bed, and a pleasant-looking nurse was sitting beside her, dressed in a tall white Normandy cap and striped jacket. She nodded and smiled, and showed her white teeth, when Agnes opened her eyes, shook her head, and jabbered something that Agnes could not comprehend. The girl felt too weak and too dreamy to attempt to unravel the mystery of where she was and how she came there. In a short time, the lady she had seen sitting in the office amongst the day-books and ledgers came in. She laid her hand gently on her forehead, saying, in a cheerful

voice, "You are better now. You are with friends. You shall tell us your story when you are stronger. You must not agitate yourself."

Agnes endeavoured to rise, but sank back; the long journey and the severe shock she had received had made her seriously ill. The doctor who had been called to revive her from her long trance-like swoon ordered the profoundest quiet, and, thanks to the Samaritan kindness of her new friends, Agnes was enabled to follow the doctor's directions: for two days she lay in a delightful state of repose, between waking and dreaming. Everything she needed was brought to her, as by some friendly magic, at precisely the right moment. On the third day she felt almost well, and expressed a wish to get up and dress. Her hostess took her down to a pleasant parlour beyond the office. There were books, and prints, and newspapers; she was desired to amuse herself, and not to trouble her head with any anxiety about the future: she was a visitor.

M. Raymond, the proprietor, came in. Agnes had not seen him since the day he brought her into his house. He was a grave sensible man. To him she told her whole story, and gave him Mrs. Warren's letters to read. "My good young lady," said he, as he returned them, "we have only a little strength, and should not waste it in superfluities; we need it all to do our simple duty. This lady was too fond of the luxury of doing good, as it is called; but I cannot understand her thoughtlessness. There must be some mistake; though, after incurring the responsibility of sending for you, no mistake ought to have been possible."

Agnes tried to express all the gratitude she felt; but M. Raymond interrupted her. She was far from reali-

sing all the danger she had escaped; she knew it in after years. "I shall write home," she said; "my aunt and cousin will be anxious until they hear."

"Let them be uneasy a little longer, till you can tell them something definite about your prospects. Anything you could say now would only alarm them."

Two days afterwards M. Raymond came to her and said, "Do not think we want to get rid of you; but, if it suits you, I have heard of a situation. Madame Tremordyn wants a companion — a young lady who will be to her as like a daughter as can be got for money. She is a good woman, but proud and peculiar; and, so long as her son does not fall in love with you, she will treat you well. The son is with his regiment in Algiers just now; so you are safe. I will take you to her this afternoon."

They went accordingly. Madame Tremordyn — an old Bréton lady, stately with grey hair and flashing dark grey eyes, dressed in stiff black silk — received her with stately urbanity, explained the duties of her situation, and expressed her wish that Agnes should engage with her. The salary was liberal, and Agnes thankfully accepted the offer. It was settled that she should come the next morning. "Recollect your home is with us," said M. Raymond. "Come back to us if you are unhappy."

That night Agnes wrote to her aunt the history of all that had befallen her, and the friends who had been raised up to her, and the home that had offered in a land of strangers. But, with all this cause for thankfulness, Agnes cried herself to sleep that night. She realised for the first time that she was alone in her life, and belonged to nobody.

CHAPTER III.

ALL who have had to live under the dynasty of a peculiar temper, know that it can neither be defined nor calculated upon. It is the knot in the wood that prevents the material from ever being turned to any good account. Madame Tremordyn always declared that she was the least exacting person in existence; and, so long as Agnes was always in the room with her, always on the alert watching her eye for anything she might need — so long Madame was quite satisfied. Madame Tremordyn had a passion for everything English. She would be read aloud to at all hours of the day or night. Agnes slept upon a bed in her room, whence she might be roused, if Madame Tremordyn herself could not rest; and woe to Agnes if her attention flagged, and if she did not seem to feel interest and enjoyment in whatever the book in hand might be — whether it were the History of Miss Betty Thoughtless, or the Economy of Human Life. Madame Tremordyn took the life of Agnes, and crumbled it away: she used it up like a choice condiment, to give a flavour to her own.

Yet, with all this exigence, Agnes was nothing to Madame Tremordyn, who considered her much as she did the gown she wore, or the dinner she ate. She was one of the many comforts with which she had surrounded herself; she gave Agnes no more regard or confidence, notwithstanding their close intercourse, than she granted to her arm-chair, or to the little dog that stood on its hind legs. Yet, Agnes had no material hardship to complain of; she only felt as if the breath were being drawn out of her, and she were slowly suffocating. But where else could she go? what could she do? At length,

Madame Tremordyn fell really ill, and required constant nursing and tending. Agnes had sleepless nights, as well as watchful days, but it was a more defined state of existence. Agnes was a capital nurse; the old lady was human, after all, and was touched by skill and kindness. She declared that Agnes seemed to nurse her as if she liked it.

Henceforth Agnes had not to live in a state of moral starvation. The old lady treated her like a human being, and really felt an interest in her. She asked her questions about home, and about her aunt and cousin; also, she told Agnes about herself, about her son, and about her late husband. She spoke of her own affairs and of her own experiences. It was egotism certainly; but egotism that asks for sympathy is the one touch of nature which makes the whole world kin. Agnes grew less unhappy as she felt she became more necessary to the strange exacting old woman with whom her lot was cast. She had the pleasure of sending remittances to her aunt and cousin — proofs of her material well-being; and she always wrote cheerfully to them. Occasionally, but very rarely, she was allowed to go and visit her friends the Raymonds.

No news ever came of Mrs. Warren. She might have been a myth; so completely had she passed away. There had been an admixture of accident in her neglect; but it was accident that rather aggravated than excused her conduct. The day after she wrote so warmly to Agnes to come to her in Paris, Sir Edward Destrayes came to her, and entreated her to go to his mother, who was ill; and Mrs. Warren was her most intimate friend: indeed, they were strangers in Paris, and Mrs. Warren was nearly the only person they knew. Lady Destrayes

was ordered to the South of France — would dear, kind Mrs. Warren go with her? It would be the greatest kindness in the world! Mrs. Warren spoke French so beautifully, and neither mother nor son spoke it at all. Sir Edward Destrayes was some years younger than Mrs. Warren. The world, if it had been ill-natured, might have said he was a mere boy to her; nevertheless, Mrs. Warren was in love with him, and she hoped it was nothing but his bashfulness that hindered him from declaring himself in love with her. Gladly would she have agreed to the proposed journey; but there was that invitation to Agnes. She must await her answer. Agnes, as we have seen, accepted the offer, which Mrs. Warren felt to be provoking enough — Lady Destrayes needed her so much! What was to be done? A certain Madame de Brissac, to whom she confided her dilemma, offered to take Agnes into her own nursery (without salary) until a better place could be found. Mrs. Warren was enchanted: nothing could be better. She wrote a note to Agnes, telling her she had found her a situation with Madame de Brissac; where she hoped she would be happy, and enclosed her some money, along with Madame de Brissac's address. The preparations for departure were hurried; for the party set out some days earlier than was intended. Agnes and her concerns passed entirely from Mrs. Warren's mind. Six weeks afterwards, searching her portfolio, a letter fell out with the seal unbroken; it was her own letter to Agnes. The sight of it turned her sick. She did not dare to think of what might have happened. She sat for a few moments stupified, and then hastily flung the accusing letter into the fire, without a thought for the money inside. She tried not to think of Agnes. She did not

dare to write to Mrs. Huxley to inquire what had become of her. Mrs. Huxley and Miriam never heard from her again; the Manor House was sold, and Mrs. Warren passed away like a dream. Meantime she married Sir Edward Destrayes against his mother's wishes. It is to be presumed that he did not find her the angel she was reputed to be; for, at the end of a year, they separated. She always got on better alone; but, as she had married without settlement, she had not the wherewith to be so much of an angel in her latter days as in the beginning.

Agnes wondered and speculated what could have become of her. Madame Tremordyn grimly smiled, and said nobody ever made such mischief in life as those who did at once too much and too little. "If you begin an act of benevolence, you are no longer free to lay it down in the middle. So, my dear, don't go off into benevolence. You never know where it will lead you."

When Agnes had been with Madame Tremordyn a little more than a year, Madame Tremordyn's son came home from Africa. He was a handsome, soldierly young man; but grave and melancholy; poetical, dreamy, gentle as a woman; but proud and sensitive. Agnes was nineteen, extremely lovely, with golden hair, blue eyes, and a delicate wild-rose complexion; a little too firmly set in figure for her height, but that seemed characteristic. She had learned to be self-reliant, and had been obliged to keep all her thoughts and emotions to herself. At first Madame Tremordyn was proud to show off her son. She insisted that Agnes should admire him, and was never weary of talking about him. Agnes had been trained to be a good listener. Madame liked her son to sit with her, and he showed himself remarkably tractable — a

model for sons. He did not seem to care in the least for going out. He preferred sitting and watching Agnes — listening to her as she read — whilst he pretended to be writing or reading. In a little while Madame Tremordyn opened her eyes to the fact that her son was in love with Agnes — Agnes, a portionless orphan, with few friends and no connexions. But Agnes was a mortal maiden, and she loved M. Achille Tremordyn, who might have aspired to the hand of an heiress with a shield full of quarterings.

M. Achille Tremordyn opened his heart to his mother, and begged her blessing and consent to his marrying Agnes. Madame Tremordyn was very indignant. She accused Agnes of the blackest ingratitude, and desired her son, if he valued her blessing in the least, not to think of her, but dutifully to turn his eyes to the young lady she destined for him, and with whose parents she had, indeed, opened a negociation. M. Achille declared that he would have his own way; Agnes only wept. The storm of dame Tremordyn's wrath fell heaviest upon her, she being the weakest, and best able to bear it without reply. The result was, that Agnes was sent away in disgrace.

The Raymonds gladly received her, and entered warmly into her case. Madame Raymond declared it was unheard-of barbarism and pride, and that the old lady would find it come home to her. M. Achille Tremordyn left home to join his regiment, first having had an interview with Agnes. He vowed eternal constancy, and all the passionate things that to lovers make the world, for the time being, look like enchantment. It was the first ray of romance that had gilded Agnes's life. She loved as she did everything else, — thoroughly,

stedfastly, and with her whole heart; but refused to marry, or to hold a correspondence with her lover, until his mother gave her consent. She would, however, wait, even if it were for life.

After her son was gone, Madame Tremordyn felt very cross and miserable. She did not, for one moment, believe she had done wrong; but it was very provoking that neither her son nor Agnes could be made to confess that she had done right.

Agnes remained with the Raymonds, wrapped round with a sense of happiness she had never known before. She assisted Madame Raymond to keep the books; for they would not hear of her leaving them. Madame Tremordyn felt herself aggrieved. She had engaged a young person in the room of Agnes, with whom no man was likely to be attracted; but, unluckily, Madame Tremordyn found her as unpleasant and unattractive as the rest of the world did. She missed Agnes sorely. At length she fairly fretted and fumed herself into a nervous fever. Mademoiselle Bichat, her companion, became doubly insupportable. Madame wrote a note to Agnes, reproaching her with cruelty for leaving her, and bidding her come back. She signed herself The Mother of Achilles. There was nothing for it but to go; and Agnes went, hoping that the difficulties that lay between her and happiness were soluble, and had begun to melt away. The demoiselle Bichat was discarded, and Agnes re-installed in her old place. The old lady was not the least more amiable or reasonable for being ill. She talked incessantly about her son, and reproached Agnes with having stolen his heart away from her, his mother; yet, with curious contradiction, she loved Agnes all the more for the very attachment she so bitterly deprecated. If Agnes

could only have loved him in a humble, despairing way, she would have been allowed to be miserable to her heart's content. But to be loved in return! To aspire to marry him! That was the offence.

Two years passed over. At the end of them Achille returned on sick-leave. He had had a fever, which had left him in a low, desponding state. Madame Tremordyn would not spare Agnes, — she could not do without her. She told her she would never consent to her marriage with her son, and that she must submit to her lot like a Christian, and nurse Achille like a sister; which she had no objection to consider her. The sight of Achille, gaunt and worn with illness, made Agnes thankful to stop on any terms.

Achille was greatly changed; he was irritable, nervous, and full of strange fancies. He clung to Agnes as a child to its mother. Her calm and tender gentleness soothed him, and she could rouse him from the fits of gloom and depression to which he was subject. His mother lamented over the wreck he had become; but the love of Agnes became stronger and deeper. The nature of it had changed, but his need of her had a more touching charm than when, in his brilliant days, she had looked up to him as a something more than mortal, and wondered, in her humility, what he saw in her to attract him. Gradually he seemed to recover his health. The shadow that lay upon him was lifted off, and he became like his old self. He was not, however, able to return to the army. He retired, with the grade of captain and the decoration of the Legion of Honour.

Madame Tremordyn's fortune was small, and consisted in a life-rent. There would be little or nothing at her death for her son. It was necessary he should find some

employment. Through the influence of some relatives, he obtained a situation in the Customs. The salary was modest, but it was enough to live upon in tolerable comfort. He again announced to his mother his intention of marrying Agnes; and, this time, he met with no opposition — it would have been useless. Agnes was presented to friends and relatives of the clan Tremordyn as the betrothed of Achille. It was half settled that Agnes should pay a visit to her aunt and cousin whom she had not seen for near four years; but Mrs. Tremordyn fell ill, and could not spare her. The visit was postponed till she could go with her husband; and, in the meanwhile, letters of love and congratulation came from them. The whole Tremordyn tribe expressed their gracious approbation of the young English girl their kinsman had chosen, and made liberal offerings of marriage gifts. The good Raymonds furnished the trousseau, and Agnes could scarcely believe in the happiness that arose upon her life. Once or twice she perceived a strangeness in Achille. It was no coldness or estrangement, for he could not bear her out of his sight. He was quite well in health, and, at times, in extravagantly good spirits. Yet he was unlike himself: he appeared conscious that she perceived something, and was restless and annoyed if she looked at him. The peculiarity passed off, and she tried to think it was her own fancy.

The wedding-day came. The wedding guests were assembled in Madame Raymond's best salon; for Agnes was their adopted daughter, and was to be married from their house. Neither Achille nor his mother had arrived. Agnes, looking lovely in her white dress and veil, sat in her room until she should be summoned. The time passed on — some of the guests looked at their watches

— a carriage drove up. Madame Tremordyn, dressed magnificently, but looking pale and terror-stricken, came into the room, her usual stately step was now tottering and eager.

"Is my son, is Achille here?" she asked in an imperious but hollow voice.

No one replied. A thrill of undefined terror passed through all assembled.

"Is he here, I ask? He left home two hours ago."

"He has not been here. We have not seen him," replied the eldest member of the family. "Calm yourself, my cousin, doubtless he will be here soon."

There was an uneasy silence, broken by the rustling of dresses, and the restless moving of people afraid to stir; feeling, as it were under a spell. The eldest kinsman spoke again.

"Let some one go in search of him."

Three or four rose at this suggestion. Madame Tremordyn bowed her head, and said "Go!" It was all she had the force to articulate. The guests who remained looked at each other with gloomy forebodings, and knew not what to do. At last the door opened and Agnes entered. A large shawl was wrapped over her bridal dress, but she was without either veil or ornaments; her face was pale, her eyes dilated.

"What is all this? Let me know the worst — what has happened?" She looked from one to the other, but none answered her. She went up to Madame Tremordyn, and said, "Tell me, mother."

But, Madame Tremordyn put her aside, and said:

"You are the cause of whatever ill has befallen him."

A murmur rose from the company; but the poor mother looked so stricken and miserable that no one

had the heart to blame her unreason. Everybody felt the position too irksome to endure longer; and one after another, they glided noiselessly away; leaving only Agnes, Madame Tremordyn, and the good Raymonds. The hours passed on, and still no tidings. The suspense became intolerable. M. Raymond went out to seek for information, and also to put the police in motion. Agnes, who had sat all this while still and calm, without uttering a word or shedding a tear, rose and beckoned Madame Raymond to come out of hearing.

"I must change this dress and go home with her; we must be at home when he is brought back."

"But you cannot go there my child — it would be unheard of."

"They will both need me — there is no one who can fill my place — let me go."

She spoke gently, but resolutely. Madame Raymond saw that it was no case for remonstrance. In a few moments Agnes returned in her walking-dress. She laid her hand on Madame Tremordyn, and said:

"Let us go home."

The poor mother, looking ten years older than on the previous day, rose, and leaning upon Agnes walked feebly to the door. Madame Raymond supported her on the other side; she would have gone with them, but Agnes shook her head and kissed her silently. Arrived at home Agnes resumed her old position. She busied herself about Madame Tremordyn. She made her take some nourishment, chafed her hands and feet, and tried to keep some warmth and life within her; but little speech passed between them.

The weary hours passed on, and no tidings; about midnight a strangely sounding footstep was heard upon

the stair. The door of the room opened, and Achille, with his dress disordered and torn, and covered with mud, stood before them. He stopped short at seeing them, and evidently did not recognise them. He did not speak. There was a wild glare in his eye, — he was quite mad.

Madame Tremordyn, in extreme terror, shrank back in her arm-chair, trying to hide herself. Agnes placed herself before her; looking steadily at Achille, she said quietly,

“Make no noise, your mother is ill.”

He sat down slowly, and with apparent reluctance, upon the chair she indicated. She kept her eye fixed upon him, and he moved uneasily under its influence. It was like being with an uncaged wild beast; and, what was to be the end, she did not know. At length he rose stealthily and backed towards the door, which remained open. The instant he gained the landing-place he sprang down stairs with a yell. The house door was closed with violence, and he was heard running furiously up the street; his yells and shouts ringing through the air. Agnes drew a deep breath, and turned to Madame Tremordyn, who lay back in her chair speechless; her face was dreadfully distorted. She had been struck with paralysis.

CHAPTER IV.

AGNES roused the domestics for medical assistance, and got Madame Tremordyn to bed, as speedily as possible. Her strength and calmness seemed little less than supernatural. The medical man remained in

attendance the rest of the night; but no change for the better took place. Madame Tremordyn lay still speechless, distorted, yet not altogether insensible, as might be seen by her eyes, which followed Agnes wistfully. No tidings came of Achille, until the next day at noon, when Mrs. Tremordyn's kinsman came with the news that Achille had been conveyed to the Bicêtre, a furious maniac. He spoke low, but Mrs. Tremordyn heard him; a gleam of terrible anguish shone from her eyes, but she was powerless to move.

"We must leave him there," said the kinsman. "He will be better attended to than he could be elsewhere. I will make inquiries to-morrow about him, and send you tidings. The physician says it has been coming on for some time. How fortunate, dear girl, that it was before the marriage instead of after: what a frightful fate you have escaped!"

"Do you think so?" said Agnes, sadly. "I must regret it always; for, if I had been his wife I should have had the right to be with him ill or well."

"You could do him no good. I doubt whether he would know you; but you are romantic."

Day after day passed slowly on without any change. The accounts of Achille were that he continued dangerous and ungovernable; that his was one of the worst cases in the house. Mrs. Tremordyn lay helpless and speechless. The guests who had assembled at the ill-omened wedding, had departed to their different abodes; most of them had come up from distant parts of the country for the occasion; none of them resided permanently in Paris. The old kinsman alone remained until Madame Tremordyn's state declared itself one way or other.

One night, about a fortnight after her seizure, Madame

Tremordyn recovered her speech so far as to be intelligible. She spoke lucidly to Agnes, who was watching beside her, and began to give her some directions about her affairs; but her mind was too much weakened. She blessed her for all her attention and goodness; bade her be the good angel of her son; and, while speaking, a stupor benumbed her, and she never awoke from it.

The kinsman assumed the direction of affairs, took possession of her effects, broke up her establishment, made Agnes a present, and a handsome speech, and evidently considered her connection with the family at an end. Agnes went back to the Raymonds to consider what she would do.

The first thing needful, was to recruit her strength. She felt bitterly the severance of the tie between her and the rest of Achille's family. They had made up their minds that he was never to get better; but, to her, the idea of leaving him to his fate was too painful to contemplate. As soon as she had sufficiently recovered she asked M. Raymond to take her to the Bicêtre. There she had an interview with the head physician; who said that Achille's case, if not hopeless, would be of long duration. Agnes entreated to be allowed to see him — of course she was refused; but her importunity was not to be put by; and, at last, she was conducted to his cell. He received her calmly, and declared he knew she would come, and that he had been expecting her since the day before. He seemed quite rational and collected, and entreated her to take him away as it drove him mad to be there. The physician spoke, but Achille did not heed him. He kept his eyes fixed on Agnes, with a look of touching entreaty. Agnes looked wistfully at the physician, who said to Achille, "It depends entirely

on yourself. You shall go the moment you render it possible for us to send you away."

Achille put his hand to his forehead, as though endeavouring to follow out an idea. At last he said, "I understand. I will obey."

He gravely kissed Agnes's hand, and attended her to the door of the cell, as though it had been a drawing-room.

"You have wonderful power over that patient, Mademoiselle," said the physician, "are you accustomed to mad persons?"

Agnes shook her head.

"Although he looks so quiet now, I would not be left alone with him for a thousand pounds," said he.

During their ride home, Agnes never spoke; she was maturing a plan in her mind. She asked the Raymonds to procure her some out-of-door teaching. They entreated her to remain with them as their daughter, and to live with them; but she steadily refused their kindness, and they were obliged to desist. They procured her some pupils, whom she was to instruct in music, drawing, and English. She still further distressed the Raymonds by withdrawing from their house, and establishing herself in a modest lodging near the Bicêtre; she attended her pupils, and visited Achille whenever the authorities permitted. As for Achille, from the first day she came, a great change had come over him. He was still mad, but seemed by superhuman effort, to control all outward manifestations of his madness. His delusions were as grave as ever, — sometimes he was betrayed into speaking of them, and he never renounced them — but all his actions were sane and collected. If Agnes were a day beyond her time he grew restless and desponding.

In her personal habits Agnes exercised an almost sordid parsimony — she laid by nearly the whole of her earnings — her clientèle increased — she had more work than she could do. Her story excited interest wherever it was known, and her own manners and appearance confirmed it. She received many handsome presents, and was in the receipt of a comfortable income: still she confined herself to the barest necessities of life. The Raymonds seldom saw her, and they were hurt that she took them so little into her confidence.

A year passed, and Agnes made a formal demand to have Achille discharged from the hospital, and given over to her care. There were many difficulties raised, and a great deal of opposition. M. Achille Tremordyn was not recovered; he was liable to a dangerous outbreak at any moment; it was not a fit charge for a young woman, and much besides; but Agnes was gifted with the power of bearing down all opposition. She argued and entreated, and finally prevailed.

Great was the astonishment of Monsieur Raymond, to see her thus accompanied, drive up to his door: that of Madame Raymond, of course was not less, but the surprise of both reached its height, when Agnes gravely, and without any embarrassment requested him to come with them to the Mairie to see her married. Achille stood by, perfectly calm, but the imprisoned madness lurked in his eyes, and looked out as on the watch to spring forth. He spoke, however, with grave and graceful courtesy, and said that M. and Madame Raymond must perceive that Agnes was his good angel who had procured his deliverance, and that it was necessary she should give him the right to remain with her and protect her. He could not leave her — it was necessary

to fulfil their old contract. He said this in a subdued, measured way; but with a suppressed impatience, as if a very little opposition would make him break out into violence. M. Raymond took her apart, and represented everything that common sense and friendship could suggest. Agnes was immovable. Her sole reply was, "He will never get well there; if he comes to me I will cure him." In the end, M. Raymond had to give way as the doctors had done. He and Madame Raymond went with them to the Mairie, and saw them married.

They went home with them afterwards. Agnes had arranged her modest ménage with cheerfulness and good taste. A sensible good-looking, middle-aged woman was the only domestic.

"I have known her long," said Agnes, "she lived with Madame Tremordyn in Normandie, and she knew Achille as a boy, and is quite willing to share my task."

"I believe you are a rational lunatic, Agnes," said M. Raymond. "However, if you fail, you will come to us at once."

They remained to partake of an English tea which Agnes had got up, Achille performed his part, as host, with simple dignity. M. Raymond was almost re-assured. Nevertheless he led her aside, and said, "My dear girl, I stand here as your father. Are you sure you are not afraid to remain with this man?"

"Afraid? oh, no. How can one feel afraid of a person we love?" said she, looking up at him with a smile. And then she tried to utter her thanks for all his goodness to her; but her voice choked, and she burst into tears.

"There, there, my child, do not agitate yourself.

You know we look on you as our daughter — we love you."

And tears dropped upon the golden curls as he kissed them. Poor Madame Raymond sobbed audibly, as she held Agnes in her arms, and would not let her go. Achille stood by, looking on.

"Why do you weep?" he asked, gently; "are you afraid that I shall hurt your friend? You need not fear, — she is my one blessing. I will make her great — I will!"

He seemed to recollect himself, and stopped, drawing himself up haughtily. Agnes disengaged herself gently from the embrace of Madame Raymond, and Achille attended them courteously to their coach.

There was a dangerous glare in his eyes when he came back. "Now Agnes, those people are gone. They shall never come back. If they had stayed a moment longer I would have killed them!"

After that evening, the Raymonds did not see Agnes for many months. Whatever were the secrets of her home, no eye saw them; she struggled with her lot alone. She attended her pupils regularly, and none of them saw any signs of weakness or anxiety. Her face was stern and grave; but her duties were punctually fulfilled, and no plea of illness or complaint, of any kind, escaped her. It was understood that her husband was an invalid, and that she did not go into company — that was all the world knew of her affairs.

The old servant died, and her place was never filled up. Agnes went to market and managed all her household affairs before she went to her pupils. Her husband was seen sometimes working in the garden or sitting — if the weather was warm — in the sunny arbour, shaded

with climbing plants; but, he never left the house except with his wife.

At the end of three years, the hope to which Agnes had clung with such passionate steadfastness was fulfilled. Her husband entirely recovered his reason; but, in this hope realised there was mixed a great despair. With recovered sanity came the consciousness of all that his wife had done for him, and he had not breadth of magnanimity to accept it. It may be that the habits of rule and self-reliance which had been forced upon her by her position did not exactly suit the changed position of things — people must brave the defects of their qualities. This trial was the hardest she had endured; but she hid suffering bravely. Her husband respected her — honoured her — was always gentle and courteous — did everything except love her; but she loved him, and it is more blessed to give than to receive. It is the love we give to others, not the love they give us, that fills our heart.

Six years after marriage Achille Tremordyn died. He expressed eloquently and even tenderly his sense of all he owed to his wife, and his high opinion of her many virtues, and regretted all she had suffered for him. It was not the farewell that a woman and a wife would wish for; but she loved him, and did not cavil at his words.

After his death she went to live near the Raymonds. She still continued to teach, though no longer from necessity; but, after she had somewhat recovered from the blankness which had fallen on her life, she devoted herself to finding out friendless young girls, and providing them with homes and the means of gaining a living. For this purpose she worked, and to it she devoted all

her earnings: recollecting the aunt who had adopted her when she arrived in Paris, and found herself abandoned. The good Raymonds left her a fortune, with which she built a house, and was the mother in it; and many were the daughters who had cause to bless her. She lived to an advanced age, and died quite recently.

THE YELLOW TIGER.

It was fully three long hours behind its time, that great Lyons diligence; which, considering that the roads were clear and open, was curious, to say the least of it. This was at the old inn at Troyes, bearing the name, Tigre Jaune, or Yellow Tiger, on a cool summer's evening. It had been a fierce, glaring day; and we — madame who directs, that is, and myself — were looking over from the wooden gallery that runs round the court, speculating what it might be that detained the great Lyons diligence.

Le Bœuf from below (he was waiting to bring out his relay of fresh and shining steeds) had it that nothing but the casse-cou — the casse-cou damné — could be at the bottom of it. His own private impression was, that the great diligence was at that moment resting on its side in the depths of that gully. Where was it? Well, let him see. They all knew the steep hill a little beyond the last stage. And the twist in the road just after? Well, the villanous casse-cou was close by, at that very turn; and, if the Faquin of a coachman had not his beasts well in hand (and they pulled like three hundred devils) or if he chanced to be a little gris — in his cups, that is — the great diligence would, of a dead certainty, meet with some heavy misfortune. Dame! ought he not to know? Had not his own beast run right

into it one Saturday night? (Significant laughter here, from bystanders.)

One of M. Le Bœuf's coadjutors, being pressed for his opinion, submitted that it could be only Gringoire. He had prophesied no good of that animal from the first. Take his word for it, it was Gringoire — who, by the way, carried his tail in a fashion that no well-regulated quadruped should do; Gringoire had done all the mischief. He had got the bit between his teeth, or had shied, or had thrown himself on the ground, and had so overturned the great Lyons diligence.

The brethren standing round, all in blue frocks and shining black belts, loudly dissented from this doctrine, as reflecting too severely on Gringoire and the driver. Peste! the horse was a good horse at bottom, with a mouth of iron, it is true, but a good horse for all that. As for Pepin the cocher, the bon homme knew what he was about; was never gris, except when off duty.

As the discussion warmed up, other parties lounging about the gateway and outhouses drew near and listened. And so a little crowd was gathered below, from which rose, upwards to our gallery, a din of altercation, seasoned with cross-fire of contradiction and plentiful pestes, mordieus, sacrés, and such profane expletives.

Said madame, turning to me with a smile, having listened tranquilly for some minutes, "The heavy diligence will arrive, nevertheless, whatever these galliards may say. I have no fears for it."

"You are expecting some guests, I think you told me?"

"Yes, monsieur: that good, gentle, M. Lemoine, with his mother and pretty fiancée. Three travellers, sir. Heavens! I had nearly forgotten about the golden chamber. Fanchonette! Fanchonette!"

Here a glass door just opposite opened softly, and a little figure in bodice and petticoat of bright colours, with small lace cap and ribbons on the back of her head, stepped out upon the gallery, as it were, straight from one of Lancry's pictures. This was Fanchonette, and the glass door opened into the gilded chamber. She curtsied low to me, the stranger. She said she had but that instant been putting one last touch to the golden chamber, brushing away some specks of dust accumulated since mid-day upon the mirrors and Dresden figures. M. Lemoine, when he arrived, would find everything looking as bright and fresh as in his own château at home. With this little speech, the Lancry sketch curtseyed low, and disappeared quickly behind the glass door.

"This M. Lemoine seems to have made many friends," I said, turning to madame.

"No wonder, monsieur," she replied, "he is so good and gentle, if that wicked brother of his would only let him live in peace."

"How is that?" I said, beginning to grow a little curious concerning this M. Lemoine. "What of this ogre of a brother?"

"He is his half-brother," madame said; "a wicked, graceless monster as ever came upon the earth of the bon Dieu. His own father left away all his estates from him, and gave them over to M. Lemoine; not but that he himself was handsomely taken care of — *mon Dieu!* far too handsomely! He, however, had spent it all, and was now wandering about the world, a beggar."

"It certainly seemed a curious disposition," madame went on to say, "considering that M. Lemoine was only madame's son — she having been married before — and

that wicked M. Charles his own child. But nobody could like him — not even his own father."

"And this M. Lemoine was expected here that evening?"

"Yes," she said, "in company with his mother, a cold, haughty woman, that always went with him, and with mademoiselle his cousin, to whom he was to be wedded as soon as his wretched health permitted. Voilà tout! There was the whole history for me! Would I excuse her now for a few moments?"

During the last few minutes that madame was speaking, I had noticed that a glass door on the right had opened softly, disclosing a prospect of a gentleman sipping his wine and smoking a cigar leisurely after dinner. No doubt the cool evening breeze was found to enter very gratefully, for the gentleman presently pushed the little gilt table from him, and walked out slowly upon the gallery, still smoking his cigar. He had a disagreeable simper always put on below his light yellow moustaches, and he had, besides, a fashion of keeping his hands buried in his trowsers pockets, which seemed as full and capacious as a Turk's. He looked down for some minutes into the court below, simpering pleasantly at the discussion still going forward, then walked slowly round to where I was standing, and, bowing low, prayed me to have the bounty and condescension to allow him to light his cigar at mine. He had been so maladroit as to let his own go out. Curiously enough, I had seen him, but a minute before, slyly rub his cigar against the wall with great secrecy and mystery. The significance of this act was now quite plain to me. I should have liked him better if he had made his advances openly, without any such little trickery. It was a pleasant evening, he ob-

served, diligently lighting his cigar. I too, he supposed, was waiting to see the heavy diligence come in. No? Would I forgive him for thinking so at first; for every creature in that dull place seemed to take surprising interest in the movements of that huge machine. "Messieurs there," he added, simpering contemptuously, on the people below, "find pleasing excitement in such talk. The poor souls! They know no better — ha! ha!" His laugh was disagreeable — very sweet and hollow-sounding. "Have you been here long?" he went on; "I have been sojourning here two days."

"I only arrived this evening," I answered, drily enough.

"Two days; would you believe it — two mortal days! Why, it is my belief that I should have expired at the end of the fourth hour but for la petite Fanchonnette yonder, whom, by the way, you may have seen. A little Chloris."

I was beginning to find this gentleman's manner so little to my taste, that I prepared to turn away and make for my own room, when suddenly a faint rolling sound, accompanied with a distant musical tinkling, fell upon my ears. "Hark!" said he. "It comes, diligence la désirée, la bien aimée! See, the gamins are already in ecstasy!"

It was singular — the contempt he showed for the poor men below. They, by this time, were all rushing to the great gateway; so there could be no question but that the great diligence was approaching. Heavy plunging sounds, as of concussion against strong timber doors, with shrill whinnying, denoted that the fresh relay knew also what was coming, and were impatient to be led forth. Madame herself had caught the sounds from afar

off in her little room, and was now tripping down the broad steps into the court. Lattices were opened suddenly in the roof and other parts, and eager faces put forth to listen. Gradually it drew nearer; the tinkling soon changed to a sort of harmonious jangle; there was a vigorous tramping of heavy hoofs, cheerful cries from the driver encouraging his beasts, with a stray note from his horn now and again; then more jingling and harsh clatter mingled together, with hollow rumbling now quite close at hand. The crowd at the archway fall suddenly to each side, and there appear at the opening two dusty thick-set horses, one on the right, of a high cream-colour, with a huge black patch on his haunch. That must be Gringoire, beyond mistake, who has thus nobly vindicated his good name; for M. Le Bœuf is pointing to him triumphantly. After Gringoire and his yoke-fellow toil two other great creatures, all four being garnished with high collars fringed handsomely with red and blue tassels. And behind them comes reeling in the great moving mountain itself, that has journeyed down from Lyons, whitened over with a crust of dust. There is a great tarpaulin covering up baggage, high heaped, well whitened too; and there are many faces looking forth from *rotonde*, and *coupé*, and *intérieur*, of baked and unwholesome aspect, as though they had gathered their share of the dust also. In the centre of the court it has pulled up short. The doors are dragged open, short ladders applied, and many figures in the blouses and shining belts are crawling up the sides, making for the roof. Now, too, are led forth the four fresh and gamesome animals, who beguile the tedium of yoking by divers posturings and fierce sweeps of their hinder legs at unwary bystanders.

But from the *coupé* — was being assisted forth, by

gentle hands — madame herself, aiding tenderly — a tall man, delicate-looking and slightly bent. He seemed a little feeble, but walked better as he leant on the arm of a stately lady in black, looking haughtily round on all about her. On the side was a young girl, golden-haired and graceful, whom I knew to be the future bride. I was all this while leaning over the balustrade, looking down into the court.

Presently, a very curious scene took place. I had seen the gentleman of the yellow moustaches, simpering to himself as though much amused at what was going forward. But, when the young man and the two ladies had begun to ascend the wooden staircase, he threw away his cigar, and walked leisurely down to meet them.

"Dearest brother," he said, withdrawing one hand from his deep pockets, "*soyez le bienvenu!* I am rejoiced to see you looking so fresh and well. But the journey must have fatigued you terribly!"

The tall lady's eyes flashed fire, and she stepped forward in front of her son.

"Go away! *Retirez-vous, infame!*" she said. "What do you do here? — how dare you present yourself to us?"

"Sweet madame," he said, bowing low, "accept my humble excuses; but I wish to speak privately with my dear brother here, who, by the way, seems to be getting all his strength back again. I have waited here — two whole days — looking forward to this pleasure."

"Stand back quickly!" said the tall lady, trembling with rage. "Will nobody take this infame from our sight? *Messieurs! messieurs!* I entreat you, make him withdraw!"

The men in blouses were gathering round gradually — to whom our hostess was vehemently unfolding the whole history, plainly working on their feelings. It was held to be a crying shame, and M. Le Bœuf was proposing to interfere physically. But young M. Lemoine gently drew his mother to one side.

"Dearest mother," he said, "let us hear what he has to say. He can do us no harm."

"No, Dieu merci," she said, "we are beyond his malice. But you must not speak with him, my son."

All this while the gentleman with the saffron moustaches had been leaning back against the rail, surveying both with a quiet smile.

"Well, brother," he said, at last, "you see, madame — gentle-minded, religious woman that she is — wishes to inflame matters. Let us finish with this child's work. I have journeyed many leagues to speak with you, and do you suppose I will let myself be turned back by caprice of this sort! Give me half an hour — but one half hour. She shall be by all the while. Also mademoiselle, if she have any fancy for it."

The young man looked round at the haughty dame beside him.

"This seems only reasonable," he said; "we had best hear what he has to say. Well, brother, come to my room — to the golden chamber, in an hour. But, mind, this shall be the last time."

"With all my heart," said the other, bowing profoundly. "I shall trouble you no further after that. Meanwhile, accept my congratulations, Mademoiselle est vraiment belle! Au revoir, then, in an hour."

He lifted his hat as they passed him, and then

walked down, unconcernedly, among the blue-frocked bourgeoisie of the court.

"Don't stop up the way, good people," he said, coolly putting M. Le Bœuf aside, "it hinders all comfort in walking:" then lighted a cigar, and strode out carelessly upon the high road.

The glass-doors of the golden chamber had been thrown open, disclosing a pretty little room adorned fancifully with mirrors and light chintz hangings. Into this they entered, the hostess leading the way, and bringing forward an arm-chair into which M. Lemoine dropped himself wearily. Madame was taking counsel with Fanchonette, at the end of the room (the chintz and Louis-quinze mirrors were quite in keeping with the Lancry figure), and, as the glass-doors shut-to gently, I saw his cousin bending over him tenderly. He looked up pleasantly into her face.

Within the hour's time, the great diligence had departed, toppling fearfully as it passed out under the archway; while the men in blue — their day's work being ended — dispersed and left the court quite bare and empty. Soon after, the stranger came sauntering in, his hands deeper in his pockets, and well up to his time. At the foot of the steps he stopped and called out loudly to Fanchonette, "Go quickly, ma petite, and see if it be their pleasure to receive me."

Soon returned Fanchonette, tripping lightly, with word that they were already waiting for monsieur, — would he follow her.

"On, then, mignonne!" he exclaimed, and walked up-stairs, round to the golden chamber, entering boldly, and letting the glass-doors swing-to with loud chatter behind him.

Madame, our hostess, reported to me afterwards, that, as she was passing by she heard strange tones, as of fierce and angry quarrel — apparently the voices of M. Lemoine's mother and the stranger. She had often heard that there was some ugly secret in the family — some skeleton-closet as it were — which he, no doubt, was threatening to make known to the world. He was lâche-lâche! madame said, several times, with indignation. It was curious, too, how the interest of that whole establishment became concentrated on that one chamber. It was known universally that there was some mystery going on inside. Even Fanchonette found occasion to pass that way now and then, gleaning, no doubt, stray ends of discourse. I, myself, felt irresistibly moved, to wander round in that direction; but, for the sake of public opinion, had held out against the little weakness. It would be more profitable, as it was such a cool, fresh evening, to go forth and stroll leisurely towards the village, scarcely a mile away. So I sauntered forth at an easy pace from beneath the archway.

It was very grateful that evening walk down to the village, lying along all manner of green lanes and shady places. There was a kind of short cut through the fields — pointed out by an obliging peasant — which led across rustic bridges and through a little wood, very tempting and retired. There was the village church, too, just after getting clear of the wood: an ancient structure, and very grey and mossy, with the door standing open. I looked in and found M. le curé at the high altar steps instructing his little band of children for first communion or other great act. A gentle, patient man looked M. le curé, as he stood within his altar-rails, and very innocent and eager seemed his little following.

I waited afar off — just under the porch — for many minutes, listening, looking round, too, at the pretty decoration of the church, — garnished plentifully with white rose-wreaths, perhaps for some high festival coming on.

It was long past ten o'clock when I found myself at the door of the old Yellow Tiger. That establishment was now about sinking into its night's repose; lights beginning to twinkle here and there at strange windows. M. Le Bœuf and all his company had long since departed, and as I entered, a man was coming down the steps with a huge bunch of keys to fasten up all securely for the night. The day's work was done, and it was time for all Christians to be in their rooms. So I took the lamp and made straight for the little alcove chamber where I was to repose; leaving, as is best to do in strange places, the light burning upon the table.

When I awoke again, it must have been a couple of hours past midnight, and I found that my lamp must have just gone out. For there was a column of thick black smoke curling upwards from it to the ceiling. The night was miserably warm and uncomfortable, and I foresaw that there was at least an hour or two of wretched tossing in store for me. To which prospect I at once resigned myself, and waited calmly for the tumult, to begin.

Though the lamp had gone out, there was still abundance of light pouring into the room through the glass-door and its thin muslin blind. For, the moon was up and made every corner of my little room as light as day. From the alcove where I lay — just facing the door — I could be pretty sure that the court-yard was steeped in a broad sheet of white light. So, too, must

have been the gallery running round (this was my little speculation, striving to keep away the hour of torment), and its many sleepers, now fast bound in their slumbers. Just then the little clock set to chiming out three, so that I had gone tolerably near the hour. As I was thinking what musical bells were to be found occasionally in these out-of-the-way villages, it suddenly struck me that there was a creaking sound outside in the gallery, as of a light footstep. The night was so very still that there could be no doubt of it. There was a creaking sound in the gallery. At the same instant, Hercule, the great white hound, always chained up of nights in the porch, gave forth a long melancholy howl. Whereupon the sounds ceased suddenly.

By and by they commenced again, coming nearer this time and mystifying me exceedingly, when suddenly, having my eyes fixed upon the door, a tall shadow seemed to flit swiftly across the door — a man's shadow, too. What could this mean? Who could be moving about in this secret fashion? Perhaps a watchman, kept by madame to look after the safety of their premises; perhaps a stranger with some unlawful purpose. I got up hastily and went over to the door to look out. There was no sign of any person being there; the gallery was perfectly deserted. The court below was — exactly as I had been figuring it — flooded with moonlight. There were also those fantastic shadows shooting out from the foot of the pillars, and underneath the gallery deep cavernous recesses, steeped in shade and mystery. Hercule was still at his mournful song, and something must have troubled his slumbers. Still, as I said, there was no sign of any living creature; so, after a little further contemplation of the tranquil scene, I shut the door

gently, taking care to secure it from within, and went back to the alcove.

The diligence passed by at six o'clock next morning and was to call at the great gate to take me up. It seemed to me, that I had but just turned round to sleep, when a hoarse voice came through the glass-door, calling to me and rattling it impatiently.

"What do you want?" I said sleepily.

"The diligence, M'sieu! it is coming over the hill. M'sieu will have to hasten himself."

I jumped up hastily and was in my clothes in an instant. Madame, with delicate forethought, had a little cup of coffee ready (the great diligence would halt for breakfast some two or three hours later), which I had finished just as the jangling music of the great diligence made itself heard at the door. As I was following out M. Le Boeuf, who had my luggage on his shoulder, a piercing scream rang out, so sharp and full of anguish that all who were there turned and rushed back into the court. There was M. Lemoine's mother out upon the gallery in a light dressing gown, leaning over the rail, tossing her arms wildly about. There, too, was madame our hostess, struggling hard with the golden-haired young girl at the door of M. Lemoine's room. Little Fanchonette, with her hands covering up her face, was running round the gallery, in a sort of distracted manner, calling "au secours! au secours!" We were at the room-door in an instant.

"O such a terrible thing!" said madame; "don't go in — don't go in!"

I knew well what that terrible thing was, having had a dreadful presentiment from the very first minute. Upon his bed was lying M. Lemoine, on his face, quite

stiff and cold; and, as they turned him over, two discoloured marks upon his throat came into view. He had been most foully done to death — had poor M. Lemoine.

Suddenly some one whispered, Where was the stranger: he who had arrived yesterday? — and some one else walked away on tip-toe towards his room. He had departed. It was plain, too, that his bed had not been slept in. It was easy, therefore, to know at whose door to lay this foul deed.

By this time, madame, now quite motionless and exhausted, had been got into the house, as well as the yellow-haired young lady. M. le conducteur said very quietly to me, that it was an awful thing to happen, an awful thing. He felt for madame's situation, but he had his orders and must go forward without delay. So he was at my service from that moment.

As we came down the steps, we found that the court had filled up with a strange rapidity; many men in the blue garments having gathered there, talking softly together and surmising; the gens-d'armes would be there, they said, in a few minutes. Le Boeuf and others were already scouring the country. So I ascended into the great diligence, sorrowfully; thinking what blight and desolation had of a sudden fallen upon the peaceful house. The cocher was impatient; he had had a hard time of it with his four struggling animals. They had been making the stones and gravel fly about furiously for the last quarter of an hour. The door was slammed to, the conductor had clambered up to his nook, the musical jingling, the crunching, the rumbling began again afresh, and the great diligence moved onward. As we reached the top of the hill, we met six tall men in

cocked hats and boots, and very white shoulder-belts. These were the gens-d'armes that had been sent for; now on their way to the old Yellow Tiger Inn.

How many years was it before I came by that road again, through the pleasant bye-ways and paysages of France the Beautiful, as her sons and daughters like to call her? Close upon four, I think. This time I had been wandering over the country in true Zingaro humour; casting about for ancient quiet little towns, removed from great high-ways and tourist profanities, where abound, choice street corners and maimed statues in broken arches and a rare fountain or so, with a certain primitiveness of dress and manners among its men and women by way of local colouring. I thought frequently of the late Mr. Sterne and his tender soul, and went round very much after the easy, lounging manner of that famous sentimentalist.

In an admirable specimen of this ancient town architecture, bearing the name of Monceaux,¹ I found myself one evening, after some three or four days' sojourning, sitting by an open lattice and looking out on their chief street. This was in a furnished lodging over a little wine-shop, which I had secured at incredibly small charges. I knew that over my head there was a wonderful bit of gable with vast slopes of red tiling, and, as of course, a little belfry and weather-cock, wherein the daws did most congregate. I knew that, externally, great beams, handsomely coloured, crossed diagonally just below my little diamond-paned lattice, and that underneath was a deep doorway with well-wrought arch and pillars, which might very well have been abstracted from the old church hard by. I knew also that at the angle of the house, just on a line with my lattice, was a

niche, or resting-place, for a certain holy woman now in glory, who had once been richly dight in gold and colouring, but was now as dull and grey as her stone canopy. To her, I noted that every man as he passed uncovered reverently; which was indeed only fitting, she being patroness and special guardian of the town.

The day's work was done, and it was a Saturday evening. Therefore were gathered about the street corner, under the saint, many of the Monceaux wise men taking their ease in the cool of the evening and discussing the fair or festival nearest at hand. Past them would flit by, occasionally, coming from drawing water at the fountain, the Maries and Victorines of the place, in petticoats of bright colours and dainty caps, and with little crosses on their necks. There came by, too, a tall dark man, without a hat, holding up his gown with one hand — monsieur le curé, in a word — who stayed for a few moments' talk with the wise men. His day's work at the church, shrifts and all, was now over, and he was speeding on to the presbytère close by. Altogether, I said to myself, as pretty a little cabinet bit as I have seen for many a long day.

Down the little street facing us (the patroness from her angle could command undisturbed prospect of no less than three streets) came tripping lightly a young girl in black, with a little black silk hood half drawn over her head. I saw her coming a long way off, even from the moment she had issued from the old house that hung so over upon the street. As she drew nearer, there came upon me suddenly a reminiscence as of Lancry and of a juicy brush and clear limpid colouring. I thought I recollected something of that face and figure, and, by the time she was passing under the window,

I had placed her on a certain gallery just coming forth from the golden chamber, with the old Yellow Tiger as background. So I stooped over and called out softly "Fanchonette!"

She was a little startled, and looked up. It was Fanchonette beyond all mistake. She was not scared at being so accosted, but stopped still a moment to know what I might want.

"Fanchonette," I said, "don't you remember? How gets on the old Yellow Tiger and madame?"

She put her little finger to her forehead thoughtfully.

"Ah! I recollect it all now!" she said, clapping her hands. "I recollect monsieur perfectly. Monsieur was there," she added sorrowfully, "all that terrible night."

"Wait for a moment, Fanchonette," I said, "I am coming down to you." For someway I always shrank from that paternal manner of the Reverend Mr. Sterne, when opening up the country sentimentally; so I went down to meet Fanchonette — ungallantly enough — at the door. "Now, what has brought you to these parts?" I said. "Tell me all your little history, Fanchonette."

"O, monsieur!" she said, "I left the Yellow Tiger long since, and I now serve madame — the tall, dark lady, whose son was, hélas! so miserably —"

"Ah! I remember that night well." And the young fiancée, the golden-haired demoiselle, where was she? I asked.

She had been with the Sœurs de la Miséricorde since a long time back — in noviciate, Fanchonette believed. But had I not taken an interest in her — at least she thought so — and in the family? I had certainly, I said, and had often thought of them since.

Ah! she was sure of it. She had noticed it in me that night when madame was recounting her history — and now, if I would be so good, so condescending, she said, putting up her hands, and actually trembling with eagerness, to come with her for one short quarter of an hour to her mistress. Oh! I did not know what a relief, what a raising up from désespoir, I should bring with me.

I looked at her a little mystified. To be sure, I said; but what could I do for her? O, much; a great deal! I could help them very much indeed! The Blessed Mother had sent me to them as a guardian angel and deliverer! Madame had been utterly crushed past hope; but now all would go well. Would I go now? She was stopping in the great house yonder.

This was mysterious enough, but I said by all means; and so Fanchonette tripped on — a messenger of good tidings of great joy — leading the way to the great house that hung so into the street. Arrived under its shadow, she lifted the latch softly, and, leaving me below, ran up to tell madame. She was away some five minutes, and then called over the stairs that monsieur was to mount, if he pleased. So I ascended a dark, winding staircase, such as are much found in such mansions, and was led along a low, narrow corridor into a large handsome room, fitted however with mullions and panes of diamond pattern much as in my own tenement. Here, in a great gilt chair (very tarnished though) surrounded with cabinets and mirrors and clocks and china of the pattern popular in the days of King Louis the Fifteenth, was Madame Lemoine, all in black, who sat back stiff and stern in her chair, regarding me closely as I came in. I knew her at once. She was just as I

had seen her on the stairs of the Yellow Tiger, only her features had grown sharpened and pinched a little; her eyes, too, had now and then a sharp, restless glare. She looked at me hard for a few moments.

"Sit down, monsieur, sit down," she said, nervously, "here just beside me. Do you know that you can help us — that is, if you are willing to do so?"

I said that anything I could do for them, provided it fell within the next few days, they were heartily welcome to.

"Thanks, thanks, thanks!" she said many times over, with the same nervous manner. "You shall hear first what is wanted of you — not so very much after all. Rather, first what do you know of us, or must I go through the whole wretched story —?"

"If she alluded," I said, "to a certain fatal night some four years since, why —"

"Ah, true! I had been there. Fanchonette had told her all that. Well, monsieur," she went on, rubbing her thin fingers together, "how do you suppose my miserable life has been spent since then? What has been my food and nourishment all that while? Guess!"

I shook my head. I could not pretend to say what had been madame's occupation.

"Try! try!" she said, striking the smooth knob of her chair, her eyes ranging from object to object in the quick, restless way I had noticed. "What was the fittest employment for the poor broken-hearted mother? Come! Make a guess, monsieur!"

It had grown a little darker now, and there were shadows gathering round the upholstery of King Louis' day. For nearly a minute no one spoke, neither I, nor Fanchonette standing behind her mistress's chair, nor the

grim lady herself waiting an answer so solemnly. Madame had been travelling no doubt, I suggested.

"Right," said madame, "we have been travelling wearily: scouring the great continent of Europe from end to end. Poor Fanchonette is tired, and I am tired. Does monsieur" — here she stooped forward, peering nervously into my face; — "does monsieur ever recollect meeting — in any of the great public places, for instance — a man with light yellow moustaches, white teeth, and a false smile? Let monsieur see his description, as officially drawn up, with proper signalement. Eyes, grey; nose, arched; height, medium; hair, yellow; and the rest of it. We have been travelling after him, monsieur."

I was now beginning to understand.

"Well," she went on, "we were hunting that shadow up and down, tracking those yellow moustaches hopelessly, without aid from any one, for how long, Fanchonette? Ah, for three years — yes! At the end of three years, monsieur — three weary years — we had hunted him down — tracked him home. It was time, though: full time! We had not strength for much more, Fanchonette?"

"Where did you find him then, madame?" I said.

"Ah! where? Why, in a lonely German town, at the foot of the mountains. But what use was it? We had no friends among the great ones, and could not lay a finger on him in that foreign country. All that was left to us was to keep watch over him until he should be drawn back again by his destiny — as they say such men always are drawn — to his own country. How long did we keep watch over him, there, Fanchonette?"

"For ten months, madame."

"For ten months, and then he departed, as I knew he would, and crept back to his own land. And now," she said, lowering her voice in a whisper, "he is close by us here — in the town of Dezières, not five miles away —"

Madame paused here for a moment, still playing feverishly with the smooth knob of her chair.

"Here is what we would ask of you, if you would not think it too much. Fanchonette has been into this town and has brought back some idle story about its not being the man; no false smile, she says, nor yellow moustaches — as if he were fool enough to keep such tokens. Mon Dieu!" she added, lifting up her thin hands, "it shall turn out to be he, and no other. He is lying at this moment in Dezières, awaiting for his hour."

"In what way, then, dear madame, would you have me assist you?"

"Fanchonette does not know this man, and my poor eyes are old and weak and would not help me to know him. See us here, then, monsieur, two friendless women, and give us this help. Go into that town, see him, speak with him, probe his very soul, and if he turn pale have them ready to rush in upon him. How were we to compass such things?"

I could only promise that I would set forth for Dezières, not that Saturday night — it being far too late — but towards noon the next day, when she might depend on my best exertions. I was touched by the poor lady's sorrows and her pale, handsome countenance, so worn and sharpened with sorrows. It was hard to resist the piteous, earnest look, with which she had waited for my answer.

"A troubled time you must have had of it, my poor girl," I said to Fanchonette, as we went down to the door.

"Ah, yes, monsieur;" she said, "but we would have travelled to the world's end to find him. I have no fears. The Bon Dieu will deliver him up to justice yet."

The next day was Sunday, and a very bright festival morning it seemed to be. Looking betimes from my little casement, I saw the whole town astir, and, in the street making towards the church where was to be, presently, the grand mass. They came in all manner of costumes: abundance of high white caps, and bright shawls and petticoats variegating the tide. There were some, too, from the country outside, drawn along by stout horses, adorned with gay harness and fringes. There were stout patriarchs trudging along, boldly leaning on their good sticks, and young girls — the Maries and Victorines of last night — with gold pins in their hair and great bouquets, and gallants in blouses walking beside them. So they went by; all bound for the grand mass. I would go to the grand mass also.

High altar abundantly decked with artificial white roses; little altars in little by-chapels decked also with artificial white roses. White roses round the capitals of the tall, grey pillars. White roses along the organ-gallery, and around the angels, and on the head of the pretty statue of our lady, or it might be of our saint and patroness, in the middle of the aisle. This was the first impression upon the senses of the curious stranger. The secret of this waste of white roses was this; it was the patroness's festival-day, and, on looking closer, I found that very many of the bouquets had, in fact, found their

way to the feet of her effigy. There was to be a grand fonction, in short, and it was confidently expected that M. le grand vicaire-general of the district, would come expressly and celebrate the patroness in a panegyric; but a little doubt hung over this prospect. There was altogether a bright, innocent aspect about the church interior as I stood looking down at it from the porch, so well peopled with its ranks of gaily-dressed peasantry, which struck me as another of those choice pictures for which I was indebted to this little place. There was a tall man in a cocked-hat who was overpowering in his attentions, unprompted by mercenary motives. When the grand mass began, a flood of boys in white, a flood of men in white, together with a train of lay figures, displaying upon their backs the gorgeous copes lent by adjoining parishes to do honour to the patroness, and now M. le curé himself, celebrant in a dazzling robe, never seen by Monceaux eyes — fresh from Paris — censers, floating clouds, gold, silver, glitter, torches, and sweet fragrance, — that was the fonction. Alack, for the music, though chaunted, indeed, with a will, but dissonant, and of the nose nasal. Nor can I restrain a gentle remonstrance against the leathern spiral instrument — that cruel disenchanter — worked with remorseless vigour by the Tubal Cain of the place. At the end of the fonction — when the patroness is happily borne back to her resting-place — comes a moment of intolerable suspense. Has M. le grand-vicaire come? Will he come? In a moment more there is sensation in the church, for there issue forth boys in white, the men in white, the lay figures even; and, lastly, walking modestly with M. le curé, M. le grand-vicaire himself. He has come, then, the long desiderated! A rather florid, portly

man, M. le grand-vicaire, but true as steel, and has come twenty miles that morning for the patroness and her flock. He will dine with M. le curé in state, and meet the maire and other great syndics. A very excellent sermon from M. le grand-vicaire, full of sound truths, with a little varnish of a Paris accent over all. For, he is not provincial, and hath eminent prospects of being a bishop, and those not so remote either. A great day altogether — a very high festival!

Shortly after noontide, a sort of calèche sent over from Dezières, departed by the northern side of the town. There were, inside of that calèche, Madame Lemoine, Mademoiselle Fanchonette, and myself. After all, madame had decided, almost at the last minute, to go forward to Dezières and wait there the progress of events.

In about an hour's time then, we were struggling slowly up the paved causeway that leads into that town: a much greater and more imposing place than Monceaux.

There is a barrière and there are officials there, and octroi; at which spot we turned sharply to the right, making for a quiet and retired house of rest, known as the Son of France Inn. At the Son of France were set down madame and her attendant, whilst I went off on foot to the Three Cold Gowns, on certain business of my own.

At the door of that house of entertainment I made enquiries in an easy unconcerned manner: firstly, as to the hour they were accustomed to lay out their table-d'hôte, and also as to whether I could be accommodated with an apartment for that night. It was explained to me that, on the score of dinner, I was unhappily too late for the first table-d'hôte, which was laid always at one,

precisely. But that, by infinite good luck, there would be another laid at five o'clock, to suit the convenience of strangers arrived for the festival. As to the apartment I might have my choice; for Garçon candidly acknowledges there are not many stopping in the house. "Bad times these for business," I say, laughingly. "Confess, in all honour, have you half-a-dozen people in your house?" Indeed he can assure monsieur that there are at least that number — or very nearly so. No, I say, pointing significantly to the keys hung close by — about three thick — who have you now? Why, there was M. Petit the avocat, and M. le sous-lieutenant, and now, let him see — oh, yes! There was M. Falcon, — not exactly stopping in the house; and there was M. Rabbe, professor of languages and belles lettres, and — Well, well, I say, so that any of them dined, I was content. O, yes, they would dine: monsieur might depend on that. M. Rabbe always dined. Good. Then I would be there at five.

I am interested in M. Rabbe, professor of languages and belles lettres. I am desirous of meeting M. Rabbe at dinner, and making his acquaintance. I walk up the street carelessly, thinking what manner of man he may turn out to be, when I am seized unaccountably with misgivings on the score of my passport. My passport, of all things in the world! Was it perfectly en règle as their phrase was? Had it its full complement of visas, and sand, and stamps? Would it do for such remote quarters as Dezières? Who was to let me know concerning these things? I stop a passer-by, and inquire with civility for the Bureau of Passports. The passer-by is puzzled — not often coming in contact with such notions — he supposes I may hear of it at the Police. Yes; and the Police? Ah! that was in Rue Pot d'Etain

— Tin Pot Street that is— straight as I can go. Thanks. One thousand thanks!

I proceed, straight as I can go, into Tin Pot Street, and discover the Police at once from the sign of a gens-d'arme hung out, as it were, at the door. Two other gens-d'armes are seated on a little bench under the window, enjoying the evening. I go up to the Sign, and ask if I may be allowed a few minutes' conversation with M. le chef. He looks hard at me, moving his hand over his chin with a rasping sound. Then, with a slow glance, he takes me in from head to foot, and under pretext of picking up a straw, contrives a private view at my back. The brethren on the bench have by this time drawn near, look me all over, and make rasping sounds on their chins. I repeat my request of being conducted to the presence of M. le chef. Upon which the Sign—clearly not knowing what to make of it—motions me to follow, and leads me into a little back room. The door is shut, and I am left alone with a gentleman behind a table—bald, and rather full in person—wearing a travelling cap tied with a bow of ribbon in front, and an ancient brown coat: altogether recalling forcibly the men that used to book you in country towns for the Royal Mail, during the fine old coaching times.

I have some curious conversation with M. le chef: for nearly half an hour. In spite of Royal Mail associations, I find him a man of wonderful tact and knowledge. Indeed, how would he have got there at all were it otherwise? Strange to say, he has shown me some queer notes of his own making during the last two or three days. As I go away it seems settled that M. le chef will not dine at home that day; but has taken a fancy for trying the cuisine at the Three Gold Crowns. He

will dine much about the time we do, only he will be served in a little Cabinet Particulier by himself. I am grieved at not having his company at the public table; for he is a man of wit and easy manners. But he has his little oddities, he says, and so shrugs me out.

At about ten minutes before five, I am ascending the stairs of the Three Gold Crowns. I find the lieutenant already there before me, walking up and down — gentlemen of the Imperial Service proving, within my experience, punctual and fatal patrons of the proprietors of such establishments. We salute each other profoundly, and enter upon the probabilities of there being full or scanty attendance at the approaching meal. To us entered presently a purple, orb-faced gentleman, plainly of the country interest and Squire Western habits, and then a little smart man, who recalled forcibly the popular portraits of M. Thiers. He seems, as it were, perpetually shooting out into points and angles, and comes in company with the gentleman of the country, laying out some local interest energetically with his pointed finger.

Behind them walks out the host of the Three Gold Crowns, heralding the soup — significant omen that no more are to come or at least be waited for. But the professor of modern tongues and belles lettres, where is he? I am so interested in this coming of M. Rabbe, that I feel myself getting troubled and uneasy in mind, and look every instant towards the door. More especially as I know from sounds behind the partition that there is a gentleman being served in private — contingent, as it were, upon M. Rabbe's arrival. Perhaps M. Rabbe may have private reasons for not desiring to meet me? Seriously I am very much disturbed, and think anxiously of the thin, pale lady expectant at the Son of France.

The soup then is put on. Officious garçons bustle about, and the clatter of China ware and tongues sets in. M. Petit — for I have learnt long since that M. Thiers' portrait stands for him — talks for the whole company. He has his sharp forefinger laid upon his neighbour's chest; now upon his plate; now vertically upon his own palm. He is for ever illustrating things with little constructions of his knife and fork, his napkin and his chair. He distracts me from what I am thinking of so nervously. The sous-lieutenant and M. Falcon accept him cheerfully as he is — and without reply — for their souls are now laid conscientiously to the great work before them.

Just as the soup is being taken away, I catch the sound of a distant step upon the stairs. Our host catches it too; for he bids Antoine stay his hand, and leave the soup for M. Rabbe. For another moment, my heart is beating hard, and there enters some one bowing low, and full of soft apologies — a little warm, too, with the haste he has made — and wiping his forehead with his handkerchief. Ah, Fanchonette! For all that artificial strip of baldness reaching even to the back of the head; in spite of those shorn lips and cheeks; of that limp neckcloth, swathed in many folds and brought down upon the chest; of that bunch of seals; and the long black garment a shade seedy at the collar; I say you should have known M. Rabbe, in one second, at that comely German town! I would have picked him out of a thousand.

He was one of M. Petit's own circle of friends; for that gentleman saluted him heartily as he took his seat. A very agreeable man was M. Rabbe, and entertained us wonderfully for the rest of dinner; excepting that at times he had a peculiar manner of displaying his teeth,

and I could not help fancying a yellow moustache just over them. He spoke cheerfully of the morning's fonction, and of the admirable sermon of M. le vicaire — such plain, sound doctrine, and so good for the people! Then he falls upon fiscal questions with M. Petit, handling them with a certain skill. The lieutenant is, all this while, too hard at work for mere converse.

At last M. Petit, looking at his watch, discovers that he has important business elsewhere, and so departs with a bow that takes in all the company. The lieutenant rises about the same time; bethinking him of the little café in the Square of the town. Remain therefore, the country interest, myself, and M. Rabbe: who says with a pleasant smile that he knows of a particular Volnay, now lying in our host's cellars, and would take leave to order up some, for our special tasting. At this moment there are sounds of movement behind the partition, and presently enters with bows, my friend the chef, with newspaper in one hand, and his glass and a slim wine-flask in the other, begging to be allowed to join the company. I confess I scarcely know M. le chef again. He is strangely metamorphosed, having now got up a little of the aspect of a town burgher in his Sunday suit: with a brusque local tone of speech. No traces here of the brown garment and the ancient travelling cap! He draws in his chair, looks round on us cheerfully, and I now feel that the time for business is at hand.

"You do meet excellent wines" — I say, in continuation of the Volnay discussion — "in some of those little towns up and down the country."

"Ay," says M. le chef, holding his glass to the light, "and perhaps nowhere so good as in this town of ours."

"The gentleman is right," says M. Falcon, with an

oath of the true western fashion — only in French — “let them match our wines if they can! Pardieu! I say what is known, and can be proved!”

“He has reason!” M. le chef says, glancing at me ever so little. “Trust to a clean country cabaret for pure honest wines!”

“Yes,” I reply, “I have travelled over many leagues of France, and I think the best wines I have fallen in with, were at an old cabaret in the south.”

“Where, if I may take the liberty?” M. le chef asks with interest.

“Let me see,” I answer reflecting, “it is so long since. Ah to be sure — down near Troyes somewhere, at a house called the Yellow Tiger!”

M. Rabbe was about to drink when I began this speech. At the moment the words Yellow Tiger were spoken, his glass was not an inch from his lips. He started. His arm shook so violently, that the wine ran over his glass. Then he swallowed it all off — every drop, with a gulp — hastily to hide his white lips, and stole a cowering look round the table, just catching M. le chef in the act of leaning forward with his hands upon his knees, watching him with intense curiosity.

“What are you all looking at me for in this way?” he said angrily.

“We are concerned for monsieur’s health,” says the chef, “lest he should be seized with sudden sickness. That name of Yellow Tiger seemed to have such strange effect.”

M. Rabbe looks at him uneasily for a moment; then laughs more uneasily still, and fills out for himself another bumper of Volnay.

“To go back to this Yellow Tiger wine,” says M. le

chef, reaching over for the flask, "was it so good now, really?"

"Famous! And I ought to remember it well. For the night I drank of it there was murder done in the Yellow Tiger Inn!"

Again M. Rabbe's glass was stayed in its course, and the precious Volnay scattered on the floor. He was looking over at me with a painful, devouring expression, which I shall never forget.

"Monsieur must be unwell," says M. le chef, with anxiety; "the gentleman will recollect that I said so at first."

"I am very unwell," gasps M. Rabbe staggering up on his feet, and not taking his eyes from me, "very unwell indeed. I shall go out into the fresh air, it will revive me."

"The thing of all others in the world," M. le chef says; "nothing is so good as the cool fresh air, with a little eau de Cologne to the temples. Stay," says M. le chef, rising with good-natured alacrity, "let monsieur lean on me, till he gets to the garden. He is weak evidently. Oh, there is nothing like the cool air!"

So M. le chef gets monsieur's arm under his own. They go out together, and M. le chef gives me one queer look from over his shoulder.

That evening it fell out that a strong party of gend'armes, with bayonets fixed and drawn closely round a hand-cuffed man, came past the Son of France Inn. There, a tall thin lady in black stood at a front window. It was nearly certain, I was informed, that the destiny of the handcuffed man, would be resolved at the Bagnes or galleys at Brest.

MY WINDOW.

I AM a very quiet man, fond of idle dreaming, fond of speculative studies, fond of a great many things that rarely make headway in this practical world, but which fitly furnish forth a life that has been almost blank of incident, — a life that parted with hope early — that may, in fact, be said to have lost the better part of its vitality when Nelly died.

Nelly was not my wife, but she would have been if she had lived. I can speak of her calmly now, but time was when my very soul sickened for sorrow at her loss; when I would have rushed with eagerness to the grave as a door through which I must pass to behold her dear face again. Sometimes a spasm of anguish thrills me even yet, when I recal her image, as she was when she left me nearly forty years ago; most winning fair, most beautiful, that image seems, glowing with innocent youth, palpitating with tenderness and joy. Then I ask myself, will she know me? will she love me? — *me*, worn old and grey — in that other world, where we two shall surely meet? Will the bright spirit-girl recognise the love of her earthly youth in the man of full three-score years and ten? Will her countenance — will mine — be changed and glorified? The angels cannot be purer than Nelly was: purer or lovelier. I cannot help think-

ing of this reunion. I cannot help speculating whether she is waiting for me to come to her as impatiently as I am waiting to depart. In the dead of the night I have awakened with a low trembling at my heart, and have been conscious of a strange presence in the room, which faded out of it as I listened breathless for some voice to speak to me — Nelly's voice to cheer me — when sound there was none.

When Nelly died, I was a young man. I had hopes, prospects, interests, even ambitions in life. But, after that, worldly matters became irksome to me; and worldly prosperity failed me. Friends and acquaintances looked shyly on one who had not elasticity enough to rise up under the weight of a crushing sorrow; they turned their backs on me; I turned my back on them. Henceforth our ways lay wide apart: theirs, in amongst the struggle, the toil, the great weariness of life; mine, by the quiet waters that flow down peacefully to death. The love of seclusion has grown upon me as moss grows upon a rooted stone; I could not wrench myself away from it, even if I would. Of worldly pelf I have little, but that little suffices me; and, although my existence seems selfish — nay, is so — I lack not interest in my kind. I catch hold of a slight thread of reality, and weave it into a tissue of romance. The facts that I cannot know, imagination supplies me with; and my own temperament, still and melancholy, suffuses the story with a tender twilight hue, which is not great anguish, but which takes no tint of joy.

My abode is in one of the retired streets of London. I know not where a man can be so utterly alone as in this great Babylon. My favourite room has a bay window overhanging the pavement, and in its cornices, its door-

frames, and its lofty carved mantelshelf, testifies to better days than it is ever likely to see again. The rents in this quarter are low; and though, at certain long intervals, the street is as forsaken and silent as Tadmor in the wilderness, still, the surging rush, the rattle, the hum of the vast city, echoes through my solitude from dawn till dark. I love that echo in my heart. It is company. If I had been a happy, I should have been a busy man — a worker instead of a dreamer. That little *IF* — that great impassable gulf — between the Actual and the Possible!

I do not begin and end my romances in a day, in a week, in a month, or even in a year, as story-tellers do. The threads run on and on: sometimes smoothly, sometimes in hopeless entanglement. The merest trifle may suggest them; now, it is the stealthy, startled looking back of a man over his shoulder, as he hurries down the street, as if Fate with her sleuth-hounds, Vengeance, and Justice, were following close upon his traces; now, the downcast grey head of a loiterer, hands in pockets, chin on breast, drivelling aimlessly nowhere; again, it is the pitiful face of a little child clad in mourning; or, it is the worn figure of a woman in shabby garments, young, toilsome, hopeless; or, it is the same figure flaunting in silks and laces, but a hundredfold more toilsome, more hopeless. Occasionally I take hold of a golden thread that runs from a good and a happy life. Such a thread I caught three years ago, and the tissue into which I wrought it is completed at last. This is it: —

I have mentioned my bay window overhanging the street; in this window is a luxuriously cushioned old-fashioned red settee. By this settee, a solid-limbed table, on which my landlady every morning lays my breakfast,

and the newly-come-in newspaper. It was while leisurely enjoying my coffee and unconsciously watching the tremulous motion of the acacias which overtop the low garden wall of a house a little higher up the street, that I first laid my hand upon the gleaming thread which shines athwart this grey cobweb romance — cobweb, I say, because so slight is it, so altogether fancy-spun, that perhaps the knowledge of one actual fact of the case would sweep it down as ruthlessly and entirely as a housemaid's brush destroys the diligent labours of arachne.

Perhaps it was the quivering green of the light acacia leaves, with the sunshine flitting through and lying upon the pavement like net-work of gold, that began my romance.

Every Thursday and every Saturday morning, for some months, I had seen a girl come round the street corner, without much observing her. I could have certified that she was tall and lissome in figure, and that she was scrupulously neat in her dress, but nothing further. That morning to which I refer in particular was early in June. The sun was shining in our quiet street; the birds were singing blithely in that overgrown London garden beyond the wall; the acacias were shivering and showering the broken beams upon the white stones as cheerily, as gaily, as if the roar of the vast city were a hundred miles away, instead of floating down on every breeze, filling every ear, chiming in like a softened bass to the whisper of the leaves and twitter of the birds. My window was open, and I was gazing dreamily on the branches above the wall, when a figure stopped beneath it and looked up; it was the young girl who passed every Thursday and Saturday morning. I observed her more closely than

I had yet done, and saw that she was good and intelligent in face — pretty, even, for she had a clear, steadfast brow, fine eyes, and a fresh complexion. As she stood for a minute gazing up into the trees there was a curious, wistful, far-away look upon her countenance, which brightened into a smile as she came on more quickly for having lost a minute watching the acacia leaves. She carried in her hand a roll covered with dark-red morocco, and walked with a decisive step — light yet regular — as if her foot kept time to a march ringing in her memory. “She is a music-teacher, going to one of her pupils” I said to myself; and, when she was gone by, I fell into my mood, and sought an interpretation of that thoughtful upcast look that I had seen upon her face under the trees.

“She was born in the country,” I made out, “in some soft, balmy, sheltered spot, where all was pretty in the summer weather. There were acacias there, and these reminded her of them. Perhaps some one she knew and dearly loved had loved those trees, and she saw in the rippling shadows a long train of reminiscences that I could not see — things past because her expression was tender, yet things not sad altogether, because a smile succeeded the little wistful look.”

After that Thursday morning I watched for her coming twice in the week, each time with increased interest. I always give my dream-folk names, such as their appearance and general air suggest. I gave her the name of Georgie. She seemed to have a certain stability and independence of character which spring out of an early — possibly an enforced — habit of self-reliance. This I deduced from externals, such as that though her dress was always neat and appropriate, it

was never fashionable. She looked what women among themselves call nice. I should say her tastes were nice in the more correct acceptation of the word, and by no means capricious. She wore usually a grey shade of some soft material for her dress; and, that summer, she wore a plain silky white shawl, which clung to her figure, a straw-bonnet with white ribbon, and a kerchief of bright rose or blue. Her shoes and her gloves were dainty; and, from the habitual pleasantness of her countenance, I knew that if she were, as my familiar suggested, music and singing-mistress, the times went well with her. She had plenty to do, and was well paid.

Her coming was as good as a happy thought to me. Her punctuality was extraordinary. I could have set my watch by her movements those two mornings in each week. I watched for her as regularly as I watched for my breakfast, and should have missed her much more. By whatever way she returned home, it was not by my street. For two full months she came round the corner at ten minutes before nine, and, glancing up at the garden-trees, passed down the opposite side of the pavement, and out of sight. All this time I could not add another chapter to my romance. She had ever the same cheerful brow, and quiet, placid, undisturbed mouth; the same dauntless, straight-looking, well-opened eyes; the same even, girlish step, as regular and calm as the beat of her own young heart. I could but work out the details of the country home where the rose on her cheek bloomed, and where the erect lithe shape developed; where the honest disposition grew into strength and principle, and where loving training had encouraged and ripened the kindly spirit that looked out at her eyes. Two or three little traits that showed her goodness, I

did observe. Never a beggar asked of her in the street whom she did not either relieve or speak to with infinite goodness. I have seen her stop to comfort a crying child, and look after a half-starved masterless dog picking about the kennel for a bone, with a look on her face that reminded me of my lost one — so tender, so compassionate, so true, pure womanly.

One evening at the commencement of August — it was about half-past six, and all the sun was out of our street — I saw Georgie, as I called her in my own mind, come down the pavement, still carrying the music roll; but not alone. There was with her a young man. He might be a clerk, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or any other profession almost, from his appearance; I could not tell what. He was tall, and certainly well-looking; but his face was rather feeble, and its complexion too delicate for a man. Georgie seemed his superior, in mind even more than in person. There was a suggestive slouch in his gait, a trail of the foot, that I did not like. He carried his head down, and walked slowly; but that might be from ill health, or that he wanted to keep Georgie's company longer, or a thousand things rather than the weakness of character with which, from the first glance, I felt disposed to charge him. He was perhaps Georgie's brother, I said at first; afterwards I felt sure he was her lover, and that she loved him.

Three weeks passed. Georgie's morning transits continued as regularly as the clock-stroke; but I had not seen her any more in the evenings, when I became aware that I had the young man, her companion, for an opposite neighbour. From the time of his daily exits and returns, I made out that he must be employed as clerk somewhere. He used to watch at the window for

Georgie; and, as soon as he saw her turn the corner, he would rush out. They always met with a smile and a hand-shake, and walked away together. In about a quarter of an hour he came back alone, and left the house again at ten. This continued until the chilly autumn days set in, and there was always a whirl of the acacia leaves on the pavement under the wall. Georgie did not often look up in passing them now. Perhaps she was thinking of the meeting close at hand.

The young clerk I called Arthur. Now that I had him as a daily subject of study, I began to approve of him more. I do not imagine that he was a man of any great energy of character; and even, what little he might have possessed, originally, must have been sapped by ill-health long since; but there was a certain intellectual expression on his pale, large brow that overbalanced the feebleness of the lower part of his face. I could fancy Georgie, in her womanly faith and love, idealising him until his face was as that of an angel to her — mild as St. John's, and as beautiful. Indolent and weak, myself, what I approve is strength of will, power to turn and bend circumstances to our profit; in Arthur, I detected only a gentle goodness; therefore he did not satisfy me for Georgie who, I said to myself, could live a great, a noble life, and bear as well the strivings of adversity as she now bore the sunshine of young happiness. If I could have chosen Georgie's lover he should have been a hero; but truth placed him before my eyes too gravely for misconception.

The winter was very harsh, very cold, very bitter indeed; but all the long months I never missed the bi-weekly transits of that brave-eyed girl. She had a thick and coarse maud of shepherd's plaid, and a dark dress

now; but that was the only change. She seemed healthy-proof against the cruel blasts that appeared almost to kill poor Arthur. He was always enveloped in coat upon coat; and, round his throat, he wore a comforter of scarlet and white wool, rather gaudy and rather uncommon; but I did not wonder why he was so constant to its use, when I remembered that it was a bit of woman's work, and that Georgie's fingers had knitted it, most probably.

Ill or well, the winter got over, and the more trying east-winds of spring began. Arthur did not often issue forth to meet Georgie then, and I believe he had been obliged to give up his situation; for, I used to see him at all times of the day in the parlour of the opposite house; occasionally, when the sun was out, he would come and saunter wearily up and down the flags for half an hour, and then drag himself feebly in-doors again. He sometimes had a companion in these walks, on whose stalwart arm he leaned — a good friend, he seemed to be.

"Ah! if Georgie had only loved *him*!" I thought, foolishly.

He was older than Arthur, and totally different: a tall, strong young fellow with a bronzed face, a brisk blue eye, and a great brown beard. The other looked boyish and simple beside him; especially now that he was so ill. The two seemed to have a great affection for each other. Perhaps they had been school-fellows and playmates; but, at any rate, there was a strong bond between them, and Georgie must have known it.

I remember one warm afternoon, at the beginning of June, I saw Arthur and Robert (that was my gift-name to the brown stranger) come out and begin walking and

talking together up and down the pavement. They were going from the corner when Georgie, quite at an unusual hour, came hurrying round it. She had in her hand one of those unwieldy bunches of moss-roses with stalks a foot long, which you can buy in London streets for sixpence, and she was busy trimming them into some shape and order as she advanced. She reached the door of Arthur's lodgings before they turned; and, just as she got to the step and seemed about to ring, she descried them in the distance. Spy that I was, I detected the blush that fired her face, and the quick smile of pleasure with which she went to meet them as they returned. Arthur took the flowers listlessly. I could see that he was getting beyond any strong feelings of pleasure or pain, through sheer debility. In fact, he was melting away in the flame of consumption as rapidly — to use a homely saying — as a candle lighted at both ends. I wondered, more than once, whether Georgie was blind to his state; for she still seemed as cheerful as ever, and still wore that calm, good expression which I have mentioned before as characteristic of her. I believe she was quite in the dark, or else so full of hope that she could not and would not admit a sad presentiment. Arthur stood silent and tired, while Robert and she spoke to each other; and, after a minute or two, he grew impatient and would go in-doors. I thought Georgie looked chagrined as the door shut, and she was left outside. I could not quite interpret that bit. She remained hesitating a second or two, and then started very quickly — as if she had forgotten something, — back in the direction from which she had come.

Sometimes in my romances I should like to alter the few certainties that impose themselves as checks on my

fancy. I would fain alter here, for instance, and make out that Robert fell instantaneously in love with Georgie, and that poor Arthur was only a cousin for whom she had a quiet, sisterly affection, and nothing more, — but I cannot. They were surely lovers, whose hearts were each bound up in the other, and there was a parting preparing for them, such as had severed my darling and me.

The Thursday after the little incident of the moss-roses I missed Georgie for the first time. Could she have passed by earlier, I asked myself? I was certainly late for breakfast. On the following Saturday it was the same. "She has given up her pupil in this direction, or she is ill," I said; but the next week I watched, with an anxiety that quickened every pulse, for her coming. I took up my post on the settee early, and kept my eye on the corner; but never saw her. On the succeeding Saturday I almost gave up my hope; for she was still absent, and I lost many an hour in devising explanations why. But the following Thursday my romance was continued. When I went into my sitting-room and threw up the window I saw the thin, pale hand of my opposite neighbour holding back the curtain of the window as he lay on his bed and presently Georgie went by on my side, that his eyes might, for a moment, be cheered as he saw her pass. After that, I often saw the wan face of Arthur at the glass, and sometimes Robert's healthy brown visage beside it. — One afternoon, Georgie came, as it were, stealthily to the door and rang the bell. She had a little basket and some flowers which she gave to the woman of the house, with whom she spoke for a while, and then she went away very grave, downcast, sad. I was sure that she knew at last.

Every day now, two incidents recurred regularly. One, was the arrival of the doctor in his green chariot; the other, the arrival of Georgie with her little basket and her nosegay of flowers. She always went in-doors and stayed — sometimes only a few minutes, sometimes an hour or more. At this time my romance got a new light, or rather a new shadow. I began to think that Arthur was all Georgie had in the world; for nobody ever came with her: nobody ever spoke to her, but the woman of the house, and Robert.

Occasionally Robert would come out with her on the door-step, and they would converse together for a little while. It was about Arthur, I knew, from their serious looks and glances up to the room where he lay. I cannot tell how much I felt for Georgie, in the loneliness by which my imagination surrounded her. I began to see in Arthur many virtues, many merits, which must have made her love him, that I had never seen in him before. His wan face looked patient, his great brow more spiritual than ever, and I was sure she would cling to him with a keener affection as she beheld him passing away. Did I not remember how it had been with me and Nelly!

I suppose when death comes amongst us; no matter how long we have been warned; how long we have used ourselves to think that he might knock at our door any day — his coming appears sudden, — unexpected. I rose one morning as usual; and, on looking at the opposite house, saw that the shutters were closed and the blinds all down. Arthur, then, was dead. The milkman came to the door, the baker, the postman with his letters — letters for a dead man.

It was Thursday morning. Georgie would pass early.

A little before nine she came, ran swiftly up the house-steps and rang. At the same moment, advanced in another direction, the man with the board on which the dead are laid. He was but just gone, then! Georgie stood by to let him pass in before her, and I saw the shiver that ran through her frame as she watched him up the stairs, and thought what he was going to do. Robert came out to her; his manly face, grief-stricken and pale, was writhing as he recounted to her, perhaps, some dying message from Arthur, perhaps some last token of his love — I know not what.

Nelly's last moments, — Nelly's death over again to me!

Then Georgie came out crying — crying, O! so bitterly; and in going down from the door she dropped the flowers that she had brought in her hand to gladden eyes that the sight of her would never more gladden on this earth. Robert picked them up; and, after watching her a few minutes on her way, went in again and shut the door. But, in the afternoon, she returned and went up-stairs to see what had been her lover. It is good to look at the cast-off mould of what we love: it dissevers us so coldly, so effectually from their dust. It forces us to look elsewhere for the warm, loving soul that animated it. There is nothing in that clay that can respond to us. That which we idolised, exists elsewhere.

Every day — sometimes at one hour, sometimes at another — Georgie came to the opposite house, was admitted by Robert and visited the relics of her beloved. She seemed to be more than ever alone; for, even in these melancholy comings and goings, she was always unaccompanied. On the sixth day from Arthur's death, there was a funeral; and Georgie and Robert were the

only mourners who attended it. Seeing the girl in her black clothing, white and tearful, I said, "She did love him, and I hope she will stay — for his sake — a widow all her life!"

The Thursday and Saturday morning transits were now resumed. Georgie looked graver, loftier, more thoughtful; like a woman on whom sorrow has lighted, but whom sorrow cannot destroy. Robert left the opposite house and sometimes my fancy went home with the poor, lonely girl, and I wondered whether she had any friend in the world who was near to her and dear to her now.

For upwards of six months I never missed her with her roll of music twice in the week; but, at the end of that time, she suddenly ceased to appear in our quiet street, and I saw her no more for a long time. I thought that this romance of mine, like many others, was to melt away amongst the crowd of actualities; but, yesterday, behold! there came upon me its dramatic conclusion. Georgie and Robert, he strong and handsome as ever, she fair and lovely, and wearing garments that had the spotless air of belonging to a new bride, came like a startling sunbreak into its gloom. They paused opposite the house where Arthur died, seemed to recall him each to the other, and then walked on silently and more slowly than before; but before they turned the corner I could see Georgie smiling up in Robert's face, and Robert looking down on Georgie with such a love as never shone in Arthur's cold, spiritual eyes.

For an instant I had a little regret, — a little anger against her — but it passed. Let Georgie live her life, and be happy! Did I not at the first wish that Robert — and not Arthur — had been her choice?

A QUEEN'S REVENGE.

THE name of Gustavus Adolphus, the faithful Protestant, the great general, and the good king of Sweden, has been long since rendered familiar to readers of history. We all know how this renowned warrior and monarch was beloved by his soldiers and subjects, how successfully he fought through a long and fearful war, and how nobly he died on the field of battle. With his death, however, the interest of the English reader in Swedish affairs seems to terminate. Those who have followed the narrative of his life carefully to the end, may remember that he left behind him an only child — a daughter named Christina; but of the character of this child, and of her extraordinary adventures after she grew to womanhood, the public in England is, for the most part, entirely ignorant. In the popular historical and romantic literature of France, Queen Christina is a prominent and a notorious character. In the literature of this country she has, hitherto, been allowed but little chance of making her way to the notice of the world at large.

And yet, the life of this woman is in itself a romance. At six years old she was Queen of Sweden, with the famous Oxenstiern for guardian. This great and good man governed the kingdom in her name until

she had lived through her minority. Four years after her coronation she, of her own accord, abdicated her rights in favour of her cousin, Charles Gustavus. Young and beautiful, the most learned and most accomplished woman of her time, she resolutely turned her back on the throne of her inheritance, and, publicly betraying her dislike of the empty pomp and irksome restraint of royalty, set forth to wander through civilised Europe in the character of an independent traveller who was resolved to see all varieties of men and manners, to collect all the knowledge which the widest experience could give her, and to measure her mind boldly against the greatest minds of the age wherever she went. So far, the interest excited by her character and her adventures is of the most picturesquely-attractive kind. There is something strikingly new in the spectacle of a young queen who prefers the pursuit of knowledge to the possession of a throne, and who barter a royal birthright for the privilege of being free. Unhappily, the portrait of Christina cannot be painted throughout in bright colours only. It is not pleasant to record of her that, when her travels brought her to Rome, she abandoned the religion for which her father fought and died. It is still less agreeable to add, that she freed herself from other restraints besides the restraint of royalty, and that, if she was mentally distinguished by her capacities, she was also morally disgraced by her vices and her crimes.

The events in the strange life of Christina — especially those which are connected with her actions and adventures in the character of a queen-errant — present the freshest and the most ample materials for a biography, which might be regarded in England as a new

contribution to our historical literature. Within the necessarily limited space at our command in these columns, it is impossible to follow her, with sufficient attention to details, through the adventures which attend her travelling career. One, however, among the many strange and startling passages in her life, may profitably be introduced in this place. The events of which the narrative is composed, throw light, in many ways, on the manners, habits, and opinions of a past age, and they can, moreover, be presented in this place in the very words of an eyewitness who beheld them two centuries ago.

The scene is Paris, the time is the close of the year sixteen hundred and fifty-seven, the persons are the wandering Queen Christina, her grand equerry, the Marquis Monaldeschi, and Father le Bel of the Convent of Fontainebleau, the witness whose testimony we are shortly about to cite.

Monaldeschi, as his name implies, was an Italian by birth. He was a handsome, accomplished man, refined in his manners, supple in his disposition, and possessed of the art of making himself eminently agreeable in the society of women. With these personal recommendations, he soon won his way to the favour of Queen Christina. Out of the long list of her lovers, not one of the many whom she encouraged caught so long and firm a hold of her capricious fancy as Monaldeschi. The intimacy between them probably took its rise, on her side at least, in as deep a sincerity of affection as it was in Christina's nature to feel. On the side of the Italian, the connection was prompted solely by ambition. As soon as he had risen to the distinction and reaped all the advan-

tages of the position of chief favourite in the queen's court, he wearied of his royal mistress, and addressed his attentions secretly to a young Roman lady, whose youth and beauty powerfully attracted him, and whose fatal influence over his actions ultimately led to his ruin and his death.

After endeavouring to ingratiate himself with the Roman lady, in various ways, Monaldeschi found that the surest means of winning her favour lay in satisfying her malicious curiosity on the subject of the private life and the secret frailties of Queen Christina. He was not a man who was troubled by any scrupulous feelings of honour when the interests of his own intrigues happened to be concerned; and he shamelessly took advantage of the position that he held towards Christina, to commit breaches of confidence of the most inexcusably ungrateful and the most meanly infamous kind. He gave to the Roman lady the series of the queen's letters to himself, which contained secrets that she had revealed to him in the fullest confidence of his worthiness to be trusted; more than this, he wrote letters of his own to the new object of his addresses, in which he ridiculed the queen's fondness for him, and sarcastically described her smallest personal defects with a heartless effrontery which the most patient and longsuffering of women would have found it impossible to forgive. While he was thus privately betraying the confidence that had been reposed in him, he was publicly affecting the most unalterable attachment and the most sincere respect for the queen.

For some time this disgraceful deception proceeded successfully. But the hour of the discovery was appointed, and the instrument of effecting it was a certain cardinal who was desirous of supplanting Monaldeschi in

the queen's favour. The priest contrived to get possession of the whole correspondence which had been privately placed in the hands of the Roman lady, including, besides Christina's letters, the letters which Monaldeschi had written in ridicule of his royal mistress. The whole collection of documents was enclosed by the cardinal in one packet, and was presented by him, at a private audience, to the queen.

It is at this critical point of the story that the testimony of the eye-witness whom we propose to quote, begins. Father Le Bel was present at the fearful execution of the queen's vengeance on Monaldeschi, and was furnished with copies of the whole correspondence which had been abstracted from the possession of the Roman lady. Having been trusted with the secret, he is wisely and honourably silent throughout his narrative on the subject of Monaldeschi's offence. Such particulars of the Italian's baseness and ingratitude as have been presented here, have been gathered from the somewhat contradictory reports which were current at the time, and which have been preserved by the old French collectors of historical anecdotes. Such further details of the extraordinary punishment of Monaldeschi's offence as are now to follow, may be given in the words of Father Le Bel himself. The reader will understand that his narrative begins immediately after Christina's discovery of the perfidy of her favourite.

The sixth of November, sixteen hundred and fifty-seven (writes Father Le Bel), at a quarter past nine in the morning, Queen Christina of Sweden, being at that time lodged in the Royal Palace of Fontainebleau, sent one of her men servants to my convent, to obtain an

interview with me. The messenger, on being admitted to my presence, inquired if I was the superior of the convent, and when I replied in the affirmative, informed me that I was expected to present myself immediately before the Queen of Sweden.

Fearful of keeping her Majesty waiting, I followed the man at once to the palace, without waiting to take any of my brethren from the convent with me. After a little delay in the antechamber, I was shown into the Queen's room. She was alone; and I saw, by the expression of her face, as I respectfully begged to be favoured with her commands, that something was wrong. She hesitated for a moment; then told me, rather sharply, to follow her to a place where she might speak with the certainty of not being overheard. She led me into the *Galerie des Cerfs*, and, turning round on me suddenly, asked if we had ever met before. I informed her Majesty that I had once had the honour of presenting my respects to her; that she had received me graciously, and that there the interview had ended. She nodded her head and looked about her a little; then said, very abruptly, that I wore a dress (referring to my convent costume) which encouraged her to put perfect faith in my honour; and she desired me to promise beforehand that I would keep the secret with which she was about to entrust me as strictly as if I had heard it in the confessional. I answered respectfully that it was part of my sacred profession to be trusted with secrets; that I had never betrayed the private affairs of any one, and that I could answer for myself as worthy to be honoured by the confidence of a queen.

Upon this, her Majesty handed me a packet of papers sealed in three places, but having no superscription of

any sort. She ordered me to keep it under lock and key, and to be prepared to give it her back again before any person in whose presence she might see fit to ask me for it. She further charged me to remember the day, the hour, and the place in which she had given me the packet; and with that last piece of advice she dismissed me. I left her alone in the gallery, walking slowly away from me, with her head drooping on her bosom, and her mind, as well as I could presume to judge, perturbed by anxious thoughts.*

On Saturday, the tenth of November, at one o'clock in the afternoon, I was sent for from Fontainebleau again. I took the packet out of my private cabinet, feeling that I might be asked for it; and then followed the messenger as before. This time he led me at once to the Galerie des Cerfs. The moment I entered it, he shut the door behind me with such extraordinary haste and violence, that I felt a little startled. As soon as I recovered myself, I saw her Majesty standing in the middle of the gallery, talking to one of the gentlemen of her Court, who was generally known by the name of The Marquis, and whom I soon ascertained to be the Marquis Monaldeschi, Grand Equerry of the Queen of Sweden. I approached her Majesty and made my bow, then stood before her, waiting until she should think proper to address me.

With a stern look on her face, and with a loud, clear, steady voice, she asked me, before the Marquis and before three other men who were also in the gallery, for the packet which she had confided to my care. As

* Although Father Le Bel discreetly abstains from mentioning the fact, it seems clear from the context that he was permitted to read, and that he did read, the papers contained in the packet.

she made that demand, two of the three men moved back a few paces, while the third, the captain of her guard, advanced rather nearer to her. I handed her back the packet. She looked at it thoughtfully for a little while; then opened it, and took out the letters and written papers which it contained, handed them to the Marquis Monaldeschi, and insisted on his reading them. When he had obeyed, she asked him, with the same stern look and the same steady voice, whether he had any knowledge of the documents which he had just been reading. The Marquis turned deadly pale, and answered that he had now read the papers referred to for the first time.

"Do you deny all knowledge of them?" said the Queen. "Answer me plainly, sir. Yes or no?"

The Marquis turned paler still. "I deny all knowledge of them," he said, in faint tones, with his eyes on the ground.

"Do you deny all knowledge of these too?" said the Queen, suddenly producing a second packet of manuscript from under her dress, and thrusting it in the Marquis's face.

He started, drew back a little, and answered not a word. The packet which the Queen had given to me contained copies only. The original papers were those which she had just thrust in the Marquis's face.

"Do you deny your own seal and your own handwriting?" she asked.

He murmured a few words, acknowledging both the seal and the handwriting to be his own, and added some phrases of excuse, in which he endeavoured to cast the blame that attached to the writing of the letters on the shoulders of other persons. While he was speaking, the

three men in attendance on the Queen silently closed round him.

Her Majesty heard him to the end. "You are a traitor," she said, and turned her back on him.

The three men, as she spoke those words, drew their swords.

The Marquis heard the clash of the blades against the scabbards, and, looking quickly round, saw the drawn swords behind him. He caught the Queen by the arm immediately, and drew her away with him, first into one corner of the gallery, then into another, entreating her in the most moving terms to listen to him, and to believe in the sincerity of his repentance. The Queen let him go on talking without showing the least sign of anger or impatience. Her colour never changed; the stern look never left her countenance. There was something awful in the clear, cold, deadly resolution which her eyes expressed while they rested on the Marquis's face.

At last she shook herself free from his grasp, still without betraying the slightest irritation. The three men with the drawn swords, who had followed the Marquis silently as he led the Queen from corner to corner of the gallery, now closed round him again, as soon as he was left standing alone. There was perfect silence for a minute or more. Then the Queen addressed herself to me.

"Father," she said, "I charge you to bear witness that I treat this man with the strictest impartiality." She pointed, while she spoke, to the Marquis Monaldeschi with a little ebony riding-whip that she carried in her hand. "I offer that worthless traitor all the time he requires — more time than he has any right to ask for — to justify himself if he can."

The Marquis hearing these words, took some letters from a place of concealment in his dress, and gave them to the Queen, along with a small bunch of keys. He snatched these last from his pocket so quickly, that he drew out with them a few small silver coins which fell to the floor. As he addressed himself to the Queen again, she made a sign with her ebony riding-whip to the men with the drawn swords; and they retired towards one of the windows of the gallery. I, on my side, withdrew out of hearing. The conference which ensued between the Queen and the Marquis lasted nearly an hour. When it was over, her Majesty beckoned the men back again with the whip, and then approached the place where I was standing.

"Father," she said, in her clear, ringing, resolute tones, "there is no need for me to remain here any longer. I leave that man," she pointed to the Marquis again, "to your care. Do all that you can for the good of his soul. He has failed to justify himself, and I doom him to die."

If I had heard sentence pronounced against myself, I could hardly have been more terrified than I was when the Queen uttered these last words. The Marquis heard them where he was standing, and flung himself at her feet. I dropped on my knees by his side, and entreated her to pardon him, or at least to visit his offence with some milder punishment than the punishment of death.

"I have said the words," she answered, addressing herself only to me; "and no power under Heaven shall make me unsay them. Many a man has been broken alive on the wheel for offences which were innocence itself compared with the offence which this perjured traitor has committed against me. I have trusted him as I

might have trusted a brother; he has infamously betrayed that trust; and I exercise my royal rights over the life of a traitor. Say no more to me. I tell you again, he is doomed to die."

With these words the Queen quitted the gallery, and left me alone with Monaldeschi and the three executioners who were waiting to kill him.

The unhappy man dropped on his knees at my feet, and implored me to follow the Queen, and make one more effort to obtain his pardon. Before I could answer a word, the three men surrounded him, held the points of their swords to his sides, without, however, actually touching him, and angrily recommended him to make his confession to me, without wasting any more time. I entreated them, with the tears in my eyes, to wait as long as they could, so as to give the Queen time to reflect, and, perhaps, to falter in her deadly intentions towards the Marquis. I succeeded in producing such an impression on the chief of the three men, that he left us, to obtain an interview with the Queen, and to ascertain if there was any change in her purpose. After a very short absence he came back, shaking his head.

"There is no hope for you," he said, addressing Monaldeschi. "Make your peace with Heaven. Prepare yourself to die!"

"Go to the Queen!" cried the Marquis, kneeling before me with clasped hands. "Go to the Queen yourself; make one more effort to save me! O, my father, my father, run one more risk — venture one last entreaty — before you leave me to die!"

"Will you wait till I come back?" I said to the three men.

"We will wait," they answered, and lowered their sword-points to the ground.

I found the Queen alone in her room, without the slightest appearance of agitation in her face or her manner. Nothing that I could say had the slightest effect on her. I adjured her by all that religion holds most sacred, to remember that the noblest privilege of any sovereign is the privilege of granting mercy; that the first of Christian duties is the duty of forgiving. She heard me unmoved. Seeing that entreaties were thrown away, I ventured, at my own proper hazard, on reminding her that she was not living now in her own kingdom of Sweden, but that she was the guest of the King of France, and lodged in one of his own palaces; and I boldly asked her, if she had calculated the possible consequences of authorising the killing of one of her attendants inside the walls of Fontainebleau, without any preliminary form of trial, or any official notification of the offence that he had committed. She answered me coldly, that it was enough that she knew the unpardonable nature of the offence of which Monaldeschi had been guilty; that she stood in a perfectly independent position towards the King of France; that she was absolute mistress of her own actions, at all times and in all places; and that she was accountable to nobody under Heaven for her conduct towards her subjects and servants, over whose lives and liberties she possessed sovereign rights, which no consideration whatever should induce her to resign.

Fearful as I was of irritating her, I still ventured on reiterating my remonstrances. She cut them short by hastily signing to me to leave her. As she dismissed me, I thought I saw a slight change pass over her face; and it occurred to me that she might not have been in-

disposed at that moment to grant some respite, if she could have done so without appearing to falter in her resolution, and without running the risk of letting Monaldeschi escape her. Before I passed the door, I attempted to take advantage of the disposition to relent which I fancied I had perceived in her; but she angrily reiterated the gesture of dismissal before I had spoken half-a-dozen words; and, with a heavy heart, I yielded to necessity, and left her.

On returning to the gallery, I found the three men standing round the Marquis, with their sword-points on the floor, exactly as I had left them.

"Is he to live or to die?" they asked when I came in.

There was no need for me to reply in words; my face answered the question. The Marquis groaned heavily, but said nothing. I sat myself down on a stool, and beckoned to him to come to me, and begged him, as well as my terror and wretchedness would let me, to think of repentance, and to prepare for another world. He began his confession kneeling at my feet, with his head on my knees. After continuing it for some time, he suddenly started to his feet with a scream of terror. I contrived to quiet him, and to fix his thoughts again on heavenly things. He completed his confession, speaking sometimes in French, sometimes in Italian, according as he could best explain himself in the agitation and misery which now possessed him.

Just as he had concluded, the Queen's chaplain entered the gallery. Without waiting to receive absolution, the unhappy Marquis rushed away from me to the chaplain, and, still clinging desperately to the hope of life, he besought him to intercede with the Queen.

The two talked together in low tones, holding each other by the hand. When their conference was over, the chaplain left the gallery again, taking with him the chief of the three executioners who were appointed to carry out the Queen's deadly purpose. After a short absence, this man returned without the chaplain. "Get your absolution," he said briefly to the Marquis, "and make up your mind to die."

Saying these words, he seized Monaldeschi, pressed him back against the wall at the end of the gallery, just under the picture of Saint Germain; and, before I could interfere, or even turn aside from the sight, aimed at the Marquis's right side with his sword. Monaldeschi caught the blade with his hand, cutting three of his fingers in the act. At the same moment the point touched his side and glanced off. Upon this, the man who had struck at him exclaimed, "He has armour under his clothes," and, at the same moment, stabbed Monaldeschi in the face. As he received the wound, he turned round towards me, and cried out loudly, "My father! My father!"

I advanced towards him immediately; and, as I did so, the man who had wounded him retired a little, and signed to his two companions to withdraw also. The Marquis, with one knee on the ground, asked pardon of God, and said certain last words in my ear. I immediately gave him absolution, telling him that he must atone for his sins by suffering death, and that he must pardon those who were about to kill him. Having heard my words, he threw himself forward on the floor, and, as he fell, one of the three executioners who had not assailed him as yet, struck at his head, and wounded him on the surface of the skull.

The Marquis sank on his face; then raised himself a little, and signed to the men to kill him outright, by striking him on the neck. The same man who had last wounded him obeyed by cutting two or three times at his neck, without, however, doing him any great injury. For it was indeed true that he wore armour under his clothes, which armour consisted of a shirt of mail weighing nine or ten pounds, and rising so high round his neck, inside his collar, as to defend it successfully from any chance blow with a sword.

Seeing this, I came forward to exhort the Marquis to bear his sufferings with patience, for the remission of his sins. While I was speaking, the chief of the three executioners advanced, and asked me if I did not think it was time to give Monaldeschi the finishing stroke. I pushed the man violently away from me, saying that I had no advice to offer on the matter, and telling him that if I had any orders to give, they would be for the sparing of the Marquis's life, and not for the hastening of his death. Hearing me speak in those terms, the man asked my pardon, and confessed that he had done wrong in addressing me on the subject at all.

He had hardly finished making his excuses to me, when the door of the gallery opened. The unhappy Marquis hearing the sound, raised himself from the floor, and, seeing that the person who entered was the Queen's chaplain, dragged himself along the gallery, holding on by the tapestry that hung from the walls, until he reached the feet of the holy man. There, he whispered a few words (as if he was confessing) to the chaplain, who, after first asking my permission, gave him absolution, and then returned to the Queen.

As the chaplain closed the door, the man who had

struck the Marquis on the neck stabbed him adroitly with a long narrow sword in the throat, just above the edge of the shirt of mail. Monaldeschi sank on his right side, and spoke no more. For a quarter of an hour longer he still breathed, during which time I prayed by him, and exhorted him as I best could. When the bleeding from this last wound ceased, his life ceased with it. It was then a quarter to four o'clock. The death agony of the miserable man had lasted, from the time of the Queen's first pronouncing sentence on him, for nearly three hours.

I said the *De Profundis* over his body. While I was praying, the three men sheathed their swords, and the chief of them rifled the Marquis's pockets. Finding nothing on him but a prayer-book and a small knife, the chief beckoned to his companions, and they all three marched to the door in silence, went out, and left me alone with the corpse.

A few minutes afterwards I followed them, to go and report what had happened to the Queen. I thought her colour changed a little when I told her that Monaldeschi was dead; but those cold, clear eyes of her's never softened, and her voice was still as steady and firm as when I first heard its tones on entering the gallery that day. She spoke very little, only saying to herself "He is dead, and he deserved to die!" Then, turning to me, she added, "Father, I leave the care of burying him to you; and, for my own part, I will charge myself with the expense of having masses enough said for the repose of his soul." I ordered the body to be placed in a coffin, which I instructed the bearers to remove to the churchyard on a tumbril, in consequence of the great weight of the corpse, of the misty rain that

was falling, and of the bad state of the roads. On Monday, the twelfth of November, at a quarter to six in the evening, the Marquis was buried in the parish church of Avon, near the font of holy water. The next day the Queen sent one hundred livres, by two of her servants, for masses for the repose of his soul.

Thus ends the extraordinary narrative of Father Le Bel. It is satisfactory to record as some evidence of the progress of humanity, that the barbarous murder, committed under the sanction and authority of Queen Christina, which would have passed unnoticed in the feudal times, as an ordinary and legitimate exercise of a sovereign's authority over a vassal, excited, in the middle of the seventeenth century, the utmost disgust and horror throughout Paris. The prime minister at that period, Cardinal Mazarin (by no means an over-scrupulous man, as all readers of French history know), wrote officially to Christina, informing her that "a crime so atrocious as that which had just been committed under her sanction, in the Palace of Fontainebleau, must be considered as a sufficient cause for banishing the Queen of Sweden from the court and dominions of his sovereign, who, in common with every honest man in the kingdom, felt horrified at the lawless outrage which had just been committed on the soil of France."

To this letter Queen Christina sent the following answer, which, as a specimen of spiteful effrontery, has probably never been matched:

MONSIEUR MAZARIN, — Those who have communicated to you the details of the death of my equerry, Monaldeschi, knew nothing at all about it. I think it highly absurd that you should have compromised so many people for the sake of informing yourself about one simple fact. Such a proceeding on your part, ridiculous as it is, does not, however, much

astonish me. What I am amazed at, is, that you and the king your master should have dared to express disapproval of what I have done.

Understand, all of you — servants and masters, little people and great — that it was my sovereign pleasure to act as I did. I neither owe, nor render, an account of my actions to any one, — least of all, to a bully like you.

* * * * *

It may be well for you to know, and to report to any one whom you can get to listen to you, that Christina cares little for your court, and less still for you. When I want to revenge myself, I have no need of your formidable power to help me. My honour obliged me to act as I did; my will is my law, and you ought to know how to respect it. . . . Understand, if you please, that wherever I choose to live, there I am Queen; and that the men about me, rascals as they may be, are better than you and the myrmidons whom you keep in your service.

* * * * *

Take my advice, Mazarin, and behave yourself for the future so as to merit my favour; you cannot, for your own sake, be too anxious to deserve it. Heaven preserve you from venturing on any more disparaging remarks about my conduct! I shall hear of them, if I am at the other end of the world, for I have friends and followers in my service who are as unscrupulous and as vigilant as any in yours, though it is probable enough that they are not quite so heavily bribed.

After replying to the prime minister of France in these terms, Christina was wise enough to leave the kingdom immediately.

For three years more, she pursued her travels. At the expiration of that time, her cousin, the king of Sweden, in whose favour she had abdicated, died. She returned at once to her own country, with the object of possessing herself once more of the royal power. Here the punishment of the merciless crime that she had sanctioned overtook her at last. The brave and honest people of Sweden refused to be governed by the woman who had ordered the murder of Monaldeschi, and who had forsaken the national religion for which her father had died. Threatened with the loss of her revenues as well as the loss of her sovereignty, if she remained in Sweden, the proud and merciless Christina yielded for

the first time in her life. She resigned once more all right and title to the royal dignity, and left her native country for the last time. The final place of her retirement was Rome. She died there in the year sixteen hundred and eighty-nine. Even in the epitaph which she ordered to be placed on her tomb, the strange and daring character of the woman breaks out. The whole record of that wild, wondrous, wicked existence, was summed up with stern brevity in this one line:

CHRISTINA LIVED SIXTY-TWO YEARS.

THE AMPHLETT LOVE-MATCH.

I.

"FORGIVENESS, Arthur? You surely need not ask for that!" said the lady, with a cold smile. "You were of age, and free to choose as you would; and, if by that choice you have disappointed my hopes and frustrated my intentions, it is scarcely a matter for which to ask my forgiveness — my recognition, if you will; and that I have granted."

"I wish you would say that in a more cordial tone, mother," said Arthur, earnestly; "in spite of your kind words my heart feels chilled and heavy."

"Do you re-assure your husband, then, since his mother's words have no longer any power over him," said Mrs. Amphlett, still with the same strange, hard smile on her face, turning to a pretty, young girl who stood timidly in the background, and taking her stiffly by the hand.

"It is only his love for you that makes him doubtful," stammered the girl, looking appealingly to her husband.

"I asked you to combat the effect — not to explain to me the cause," replied Mrs. Amphlett. "I am afraid you do not understand very quickly. You are embarrassed, and want self-possession, I see; you blush, too,

and lose your grace of outline in the awkward angularity of confession. We shall have some training to go through, before you will be fit for the drawing-rooms of my friends and your husband's associates."

She laughed; — a low, forced, contemptuous laugh, that completed poor Geraldine's dismay. Turning to her husband she retreated into his arms; and, burying her face in his bosom, exclaimed piteously:

"Oh, Arthur! take me away — take me away!" then burst into tears.

Mrs. Amphlett quietly rang the bell.

"A glass of cold water, Jones; and ask Gryce for the sal-volatile, which is in my room," she said, when the man entered. "This young lady is hysterical."

The lady's tone and manner of unutterable contempt roused Geraldine from her weakness more than cold water or sal-volatile. She felt, too, Arthur's heart throb under her hand; and though he passed his arm round her and pressed her kindly to him, as if mutely assuring her of his protection, she feared she had annoyed him, more because she had been silly, than because she showed displeasure.

"No, never mind now," she said, trying to laugh, and shaking back the bright, brown hair which had fallen in disorder over her face. "I am quite well now — it is nothing — I am very sorry," she added, with a running accompaniment of small sobs.

"Are you often hysterical?" asked Mrs. Amphlett, her light hazel eyes fixed sternly on her. "It must be very inconvenient to you, I should think, and scarcely befitting Mrs. Arthur Amphlett. You may take it away again, Jones," she said to the footman who bustled in with the cold water and a small phial on a silver stand;

"or — no, stay, — you had better leave them. You may be attacked again," she added, to Geraldine.

"I assure you, mother, I never before saw my wife so nervous," exclaimed Arthur. "In general, she is both brave and cheerful. I never knew her so shaken."

"Indeed? It is unfortunate then, that she should have selected me, and our first interview, for the display of a weakness which some, I believe, call interesting; but which to me is puerile; which, in fact, I regard as temporary insanity. Come!" she added, arranging herself in her easy-chair, and speaking with a little less pitiless deliberation; "we have now got through the first meeting; which, as you were the delinquents, I presume, you dreaded more than I. Understand then, that I overlook all the personal disrespect there has been in your secret marriage, Arthur: all the disappointment, and wounded pride I have had in your marrying so far beneath you. I am a woman of plain words, Geraldine. Your name is Geraldine, is it not? I thought you started and looked surprised when I called you so. No matter! — and I invite you both to remain with me as long as it suits you to make Thor-nivale your home. Now let the subject be dropped. Gryce will show you to your room, young lady, if you ring the bell twice; and, I dare say, in time, we shall become tolerably well acquainted."

"Arthur! dear Arthur! what will become of me if your mother does not soften towards me!" cried poor Geraldine, when she was alone with her husband.

"Be patient, love, for a few days," said Arthur, soothingly. "She has had much sorrow in her life, and that has made her harder than she was by nature. But I cannot believe she will be always so strange as she is

to-day. I cannot believe but that my Geraldine's sweetness and goodness will soften her, and lead her to love and value one who cannot be known without being loved."

"Oh, Arthur! I never prized your dear words so much as to-day," exclaimed the young wife, with a look and gesture of most touching devotion. "While you love me, and believe in me, and are not ashamed of me, all the world might scorn me, — I should still be proud and blessed."

"All the world shall honour you," said Arthur, laughing. "But, come, bathe those great, blue eyes, and draw a veil between their love and the outside world. Meet my mother with as much composure and ease, and with as little show of feeling as you can. Remember, she respects strength more than she sympathises with feeling. She would honour a victorious foe — however vile — more than she would pity a prostrate one, however virtuous. Strength, will, self-assertion she respects, even when in direct opposition to herself: timidity, obedience, and excitability she simply despises and tramples under foot. Don't be afraid of her. Assert yourself and all will come right. Is not your husband by to support you?"

"Arthur! I wish you would give me something terrible to do for you! I feel as if I could go through the fiercest, wildest martyrdom for you and your love. I could die for you —"

"But you dare not oppose my mother? Is that it? Darling! you shall live for and with me; and that is better than dying. Ah! I wonder if you will say such words after we have been married as many years as now days. Let me see, — how many? Twenty-six. We are almost at the end of our honeymoon, Geraldine!"

II.

"I THINK Geraldine is slightly improved since she came," said Mrs. Amphlett, one morning, to her son. "She is rather less awkward and mannerless than she was."

"Awkward was never the word for her," said Arthur, briskly. "She is only shy and unused to the world. She is singularly graceful, I think."

Mrs. Amphlett lifted her eyebrows.

"Think how young she is!" continued Arthur, answering his mother's look, — "not quite twenty, yet — and was never in society before she came here."

"How strange it is," continued the mother, as if speaking to herself, "to see the marriages which some men make! — men of intellect, wealth, education, standing, — all that you imagine would refine their tastes and render them fastidious in their choice. Yet these are the very persons who so often marry beneath them. Instead of choosing the wife who could best fulfil their social requirements, they think only of pleasing the eye, which they call love — as you have done, Arthur, in choosing Geraldine in place of Miss Vaughan."

"Miss Vaughan! Why you might as well have asked me to marry a statue. A handsome girl, I confess; but without a spark of life or a drop of human blood in her."

"That may be. Yet she was the right and natural wife for you. She was a woman of your own age and your own standing; formed to be the leader of her society as befits your wife; rich, well born; in short, possessing all the requisite qualifications of the future mistress of Thornivale. You disregard such patent harmony of circumstances for what? — for a good little blue-eyed

nobody; who cannot receive like a gentlewoman, and who steps into her carriage with the wrong foot."

"But who has goodness, love, innocence, constancy —"

"Don't be a fool, Arthur," interrupted Mrs. Amphlett. "What do you get, pray, with this excessive plasticity of nature? All very delightful, I dare say, when confined to you, and while you are by her side to influence her; but, when you are away, will not the same facility which renders her so delightful to you, place her as much under the influence of another, as she is under yours? Foolish boy! you have burdened yourself with that most intolerable burden of all — the weakness and incapacity of a life-long companion. There! don't protest, or you will make me angry. I know she is very amiable and beautiful, and charming, and good, and all that; but she has no more strength, self-reliance, common sense nor manner than a baby. And you know this as well as I. Here she is. — I was just talking of you, Geraldine. Are you well to-day?" she asked suddenly.

"Yes, thank you, quite well," said Geraldine, always nervous when speaking to her mother-in-law.

"I thought not; you are black under the eyes, and your hair is dull. Will you drive with me to-day?"

"If you please," said Geraldine.

"Or ride with your husband?"

"Whichever you and Arthur like best."

"My dear young lady," said Mrs. Amphlett, with one of her stony looks, "when *will* you learn to have a will of your own?"

"Yes, Geraldine! I wish you would always say what you, yourself, really prefer, when you are asked," said Arthur, with a shadow of testiness.

"I am afraid of being selfish and inconsiderate to

others," said Geraldine, hastily. "But, if you please, then, I would rather ride with Arthur."

"You know I am going to Croft to look at young Vaughan's stud," returned Arthur, still with the same accent of irritability. "How, then, can I ride with you to-day?"

"Ah, see, now! what use in giving me my choice?" cried Geraldine, making a sad attempt to smile and to seem gay; tears rushing into her eyes, instead; for, the three weeks during which she had been under her lady-mother's harrow, had reduced her to a state of chronic depression.

"Would it not be more dignified if you did not cry whenever you are spoken to?" said the pitiless hawk-eyed lady.

"I am not crying," said Geraldine, boldly.

"No? — What is that on your hand, if it be not a tear? Fie! you must not be untruthful, according to the common vice of the weak."

Arthur went to the window, pale with suppressed passion. For the moment he hated Geraldine. The young wife had passed a sleepless night. She was nervous and unwell. She tried to calm herself, but she felt as if something gave way within her, and sighing gently she sank very quietly back against the pillows of the ottoman where she was sitting, in a dead swoon.

A loud knock came to her door.

"Geraldine!" exclaimed Mrs. Amphlett, "Geraldine! Why, bless my soul, Arthur, the girl has fainted!"

Before any order or aid could be given the footman threw open the door, and a lady, all flounces, rustling silk, dignity, and statuesque beauty — Arthur's natural

wife, as Mrs. Amphlett called her — Miss Vaughan, of Croft, walked leisurely forward.

Calmly surveying the fainting Geraldine through her eye-glass, the visitor turned gracefully away, saying, as Mrs. Amphlett herself had once said: "How very inconvenient for her!"

Arthur reddened and turned pale by turns; "Good!" said Mrs. Amphlett, to herself, with a cruel smile, "the first blow is really struck now!"

She led Miss Vaughan into the inner drawing-room, while Gryce attended on Geraldine.

"You had better leave my maid with your wife, Arthur," she said, speaking as she stood between the rooms, holding the curtain in her hand. But Arthur refused. No! he would rather attend to her himself.

"What a model husband," said Miss Vaughan; but, in a voice so calm, so sweet, so silvery and even, that no one could know whether she spoke ironically or admiringly. Arthur was in a bad humour, and disposed to see all in shadow. He took her words as a cutting satire; and Geraldine fared none the better in his heart for the belief. This was the first time, since he had known Geraldine, that a thought of unfavourable criticism had crossed his mind; the first time that he had said to himself, "I wish I had waited."

Mrs. Amphlett had the art — no one exactly knew how — of making every person appear illogical, ridiculous, ungraceful, ill-bred; yet, not from any special amount of grace or good breeding in herself; rather the reverse. Her manners were chiefly noticeable for their undisguised contempt, and their immovable assumption of superiority; though she was, certainly, a handsome woman, yet it was not of a kind to throw any other

beauty into the shade. She was pale to bloodlessness, with a fierce eye and a cruel jaw. She wore her white hair braided low on her square forehead; but her thick, straight eyebrows were still black as ebony, and the light-hazel, deep set eyes beneath them had lost none of their fire or power. The lines between her brows were deep and harsh. The centre furrow — the Amphlett cut, it was called — with the heavy brow swelling on each side, was especially forbidding. Her nose was sharp, high and handsome; her thin lips closed lightly over small and even — but discoloured — teeth; and her chin was square-cut, massive, and slightly protruding. Not then from grace or beauty came her special power of moral oppression; but from her cruelty. She was infinitely cruel and harsh. She said exactly what she thought, be it ever so painful; and no one ever knew her to soften her words for pity, grace, or delicacy. She prided herself on her honesty, her directness, her absence of false sentiment, and her ruthless crusade against all forms of weakness. In her first interview with any one she measured that person's power of self-assertion. If the stranger yielded to her, whether from timidity or amiability, she set her foot on the stranger's neck and kept it there. If opposed, she hated, but still respected her opponent. The only thing in the world that she respected was strength; and the only person in her neighbourhood to whom she was not insolent was Miss Vaughan. For, Miss Vaughan, though of a different nature, was as dauntless and self-asserting as Mrs. Amphlett, and suffered no one to come too near her. They were co-queens — not rivals — and regarded each other's rights.

As for Geraldine, she simply despised her: honouring her with only a reflective hatred, because of her marriage

with her son. Had it not been for that, she would have quietly walked over her and have trodden her out of her path. But she could not do this now; so Geraldine was promoted to the dignity of her intense hatred and ceaseless, fierce displeasure. The girl felt her position and pined under it. Hence she was losing those merely outside physical graces she had promised when she married; and which had counted for something in her husband's love. Arthur, too, was influenced by his mother's perpetual harping on Geraldine's faults. Soon he learnt to apologise for her; then to criticise her himself — not always favourably — and lastly, to feel slightly ashamed of her. His pride and manhood prevented his falling very low there; but a great peril lay before him: none the less perilous because not confessed.

In the midst of all these dangerous beginnings Arthur was called away on business, cunningly provided for him, and Geraldine was left to the care of her mother-in-law. The heavy gates had scarcely swung back for her son to pass out, when Mrs. Amphlett sat down to write a letter to Cousin Hal — the scapegrace of the family — the handsomest life-guardsman and, by repute, the most successful lady-killer of his generation.

III.

GERALDINE, who had been piteously terrified at the prospect of keeping house alone with her Gorgonic mother, was surprised to find how suddenly the old lady changed. She laid aside her harsh and insolent manner, was kind, considerate, gentle, — ceased to find fault — nay, was almost flattering; and Geraldine, who was as loving as she was timid, soon became quite playful and

filial, and thought, perhaps, after all she had been to blame, or had been only fanciful. They had passed a few happy days thus — happy days, in spite of the strange desolation which her husband's first absence makes for the young wife — when a carriage drove up, and out dashed a fine, handsome, young fellow, all bright blue-eyes, moustache, white teeth, military swagger and merriment; who kissed Mrs. Amphlett as if he liked to kiss her, and seemed at home in the house, and master of every one in it, before he had fairly crossed the threshold. This was Cousin Hal.

Never was there such a delightful companion as Cousin Hal! Full of fun and anecdote; always lively; the most goodnatured person in the world; possessing the largest amount of chivalry to women of which modern manners are capable; respectful while familiar, and his familiarity itself so affectionate and manly, that no one was ever known to quarrel with him, and many were found to love him — in fact it was his speciality, and the motive of his many triumphal pæans. All these characteristics made him a dangerously delightful companion for most young ladies. But Hal, though a scapegrace, had his heart in the right place; and, fond as he was of mischief, had no love for evil, nor for vice.

At first Geraldine was shy toward him, intending to be matron-like and dignified; but Cousin Hal laughed all that out of her; and, in an incredibly short time established himself on the most comfortable footing imaginable; Aunt Amphley, as he called her, giving the pretty young wife into his care in the oddest way possible: especially odd in her, one of the strictest known dragons of propriety extant. For instance, Geraldine demurred at riding alone with him — “Would Arthur like it?” And

Mrs. Amphlett answered, "Who is the best judge of propriety, you or I? And if I say that you may ride with your cousin, is it fitting in you to virtually tell me that I am an insecure guide to you, and that my habits and views are improper for you to adopt?"

Geraldine wrote daily to her husband. She had very little to write about, excepting her love for him, and how pleasant Cousin Hal made gloomy old Thornivale; and, naturally, Cousin Hal came in for a large share of the canvas. He was the only fact in the present; and facts take wide dimensions. Now, between Arthur and Cousin Hal there had always been, since very boyhood, a distinct and decided enmity. Not explosive nor exploded; but none the less fierce because subdued and smouldering. He called Arthur surly; Arthur called him frivolous: he said Arthur should have been a priest; Arthur said that he should have been an actor, if not a Merry Andrew. So Arthur was furious when he heard of his being at Thornivale. He wondered at his mother, abused Hal, called Geraldine silly; and then he thought of what his mother had once said about the girl's facility of obedience and impressibility, and he was doubly jealous. In which amiable frame of mind he received a letter from his mother. After some business preliminaries the letter said:

"It is quite pleasant to see Geraldine and Henry; they play together as if they were still children in the nursery. Geraldine has grown so pretty, and is all life and vivacity: she is quite a different person to the lachrymose, nervous, depressed schoolgirl she was when you were here. I fear you kept her down too much: Henry, on the contrary, encourages her. He is charmed by her frankness and playfulness, she with his good temper and affectionate ways. And certainly he is a very charming fellow, though I cannot go to Geraldine's extent of enthusiasm, when she said last night that she wished you were more like him. To me, every one's individuality is sacred, and I would have no moral patchwork if I could.

Miss Vaughan vexes me that she dislikes Henry so much. She spoke quite sternly to your wife last evening about her evident partiality, which Geraldine calls 'cousinship;' but Miss Vaughan crushed her with one of her lofty looks, and little Geraldine ran off to Henry — cousin Hal, as she calls him — for shelter and protection."

Arthur read no more. He crushed the letter in his hand and, covering his face, groaned. Neither that day nor the next, nor the next, again, did he write to his wondering wife. Hitherto he had written every day, according to the fashion of husband-lovers; but now, too suspicious to write naturally, too proud to betray his suspicions, he chose not to write at all, as the easiest solution of the difficulty. Whereby he nearly broke poor Geraldine's heart, which, not reproving her, furnished her with no clue to the enigma. She was sure he was ill — he had met with some accident — he had been run over by an omnibus or by one of those immense waggons — he had been garotted — he was dying — he was dead. This was her ascending scale of horrors; at which her mother scoffed grimly, but which kind-hearted Hal tried to cheer and soothe away. On the fourth day the letter came — short, reserved, cold. It said nothing to wound, but nothing to delight, the young wife. Geraldine almost wished he had not written at all; though she was glad and grateful to find he was well, and that nothing had happened to him.

She answered as if no cloud had fallen between them; noticing nothing. She told him all that she had been doing, both with and without Cousin Hal's name intermixed; amongst other things, how kind his mother was to her, and how agreeable Miss Vaughan could be when she was not affected and on stilts, as she was the other day, when she and his cousin rode over to Croft.

"My mother was right," said Arthur, grinding his teeth, "Geraldine has the common vice of the weak; she is not truthful. And this letter — boasting of my mother's kindness, and Miss Vaughan's cordiality, is a proof of it. I have been a fool. How could I expect a woman not of my own station to have the feelings of a thorough-bred gentle-woman, and to be delicate and faithful under the coarse lure of such a popinjay as that! How coldly she writes! She does not even allude to my long silence. Of course, there must be separation now: yes, before this very month is out it must be arranged. Three months after marriage, and to separate; what a testimony to the wisdom of love-matches! If I had that fellow here —" he continued above his breath, taking up a table-knife that lay near his untasted breakfast. Then, with a sudden impulse, he flung it savagely from him. The knife fell quivering in the door, and for that moment Arthur was a murderer in his heart.

Together with Geraldine's letter, lay one from Mrs. Amphlett, as yet unopened. He broke the seal almost mechanically, but drank in every word with thirsty passion, as soon as he set in fairly to the reading.

"I hope your business is progressing favourably, and that those perplexing lawyers have nearly come to the end of obscuring so plain a question as this was. We shall all be glad to see you at home again, though indeed I cannot say that your wife has been silly in fretting for you, as I expected. On the contrary, she is in higher spirits than ever, and every day adds to her exuberant happiness. She made even me laugh; although, as you know, I am not much given to that exercise; but her manner for these last three days has been so irresistibly comic when speaking of your silence, that even I could not help joining in the general merriment. She is a good mimic, I find; for in the scenes which she gave — one representing you as garotted by some of those horrid men, another as run over by one of Barclay's beer waggons, another as lying with a splitting headache, calling for soda-water and ices — she really acted with wonderful spirit and character. I thought Henry would have gone into a fit with laughing;

and it was really very droll. Of course I knew that you were perfectly safe, or else I should not have allowed such levity on her part; but I have given her of late very great scope, for the purpose of studying her character; and I think I have come to the end of what I wanted to know. Your judgment on Miss Vaughan was, I fear, more correct than mine. She is a statue. When Geraldine was acting those scenes, as I tell you, she sat with a settled frown on her face; and at the end rose very haughtily, and lectured your wife for her levity and want of feeling. Henry took Geraldine's part; and he and Miss Vaughan spoke more truthfully than politely to each other. At the conclusion of the argument (which was more properly a wrangle), Geraldine put her hand in Henry's, and told him to kiss it, in token of his fealty. But I thought this going rather too far, and interfered. I desire you not to take any notice of what I have said. There is nothing reprehensible in your wife's conduct, and only Miss Vaughan's excessive prudery would have found cause of blame in it. If I do not, you need not be alarmed."

But this last paragraph destroyed Mrs. Amphlett's whole web. She forgot that, by giving a tangible shape to the suspicions she wished only to insinuate, she put the game out of her own hands. That very night Arthur left London, his business yet unfinished and his lawyers busy in still further entangling a very plain case.

IV.

THE next morning, while the Thornivale party were quietly seated at breakfast, Arthur strode into the room like some melo-dramatic tyrant: pale, haggard, dark-browed, and angry. Geraldine, with a glad cry — too glad to notice her husband's looks — flung herself into her husband's arms. Henry rose, half perplexed and half amused; he saw by Arthur's lowering brow that a storm was brooding, and — man of the world like — guessed the cause, instinctively. Mrs. Amphlett, for the first time in her life, felt baffled. She had counted on Arthur's reserve, and in Geraldine's timidity, not to come to an explanation together.

After a sulky breakfast, Arthur told Geraldine to accompany him into the park. He did not ask her — he commanded her; much as if she had been a slave or a child.

"Let me speak to you first, Arthur," said Mrs. Amphlett, trying to be authoritative.

"No!" replied Arthur, sternly; "my business is with my wife."

"And your cousin too, I suspect," muttered Cousin Hal to himself.

Arthur and his wife paced down the broad-walk leading to the beech avenue. He put aside the little hand that sought to clasp his silently and moodily. Reaching a garden-chair he motioned her to seat herself, while he placed himself by her side. He was agitated; and, though resolved to finish all to-day, did not well know how to begin. She looked so lovely, and he was but a young husband, and this their first meeting after some three weeks of separation. She had been so unfeignedly glad to see him, too, and that did not look like coolness: nor had Cousin Hal looked annoyed or guilty; and, though he had watched them — looking for evil — he had not seen a glance pass between them that wore the shadow of undue intelligence: they seemed good friends, as was natural, but there was nothing more; so that he felt at a loss now; for his grievances had vanished marvellously.

Geraldine was the first to speak.

"Something is wrong with you, Arthur?" she said quickly, but trembling.

"Yes, Geraldine — very wrong."

"With me?" and her hand stole softly up to his face.

"Yes, with you — only with you."

"Why do you not look at me when you say so?" she said, creeping closer to him.

He turned his eyes upon her. Her eyes were so full of love, her whole manner and attitude so eloquent of child-like devotedness, that his heart overflowed and overwhelmed all his jealous fancies, like feverish dreams drowned in the morning sunlight. He took her hands in both of his, and looked fixedly and lovingly, but sadly, into her eyes.

"So beautiful and so false!" he said, half aloud. "Can she be really faithless with eyes so full of love and innocence? And, yet — has my mother lied to me?"

"Why do you speak so low, Arthur? I cannot hear you. Tell me frankly, what it is that lies on your heart against me. Whatever it may be, tell me openly; and I will answer you from my very soul, as I have always answered you. I have never deceived you, Arthur; and I would not begin a career of falsehood and hypocrisy to-day."

"You must read these. I can tell you nothing more." Arthur put his mother's letters into her hands.

Geraldine read them through — all of them — and they were numerous. Her colour deepened and her eyes darkened; but she read them to the end quite quietly. She gave them back to him with the same unnatural stillness: sitting for a moment in utter silence. Then she rose.

"Arthur," she said, "you must come with me to your mother. Your cousin and Miss Vaughan must be there, too."

"Nonsense, Geraldine," said Arthur, who had a con-

stitutional horror of demonstrations; "I will have no foolish scene for the whole county to talk of. What we have to do must be done quietly, and between ourselves: alone. Henry and Miss Vaughan, indeed! I will not hear of such folly!"

"I insist!" said Geraldine, in a deep, still voice, and with heavy emphasis.

"I insist, Geraldine! That is strange language from you to me!"

"The occasion is strange, Arthur. Ah!" she added bitterly; "and you, too, have made that old, blind mistake! Because I am not exacting nor selfish, in my daily life; because I am naturally timid and easily depressed; you think that I could have no sense of justice to myself; no self-respect; no firmness. If you have made that mistake, you must unlearn your lesson to-day. Come! this affair must be explained at once!"

"But, Geraldine —"

"Are you in league with your mother to defame me?" said Geraldine, her lips quivering and her eyes almost flashing. Arthur put away the hand which she had laid on his arm; and, without uttering another word, strode gloomily by her side into the house.

At the hall-door they encountered Miss Vaughan. Geraldine knew that she was coming early to ride with her and cousin Hal to the Dripping Well; so that there was nothing remarkable in her arrival at this moment; nor in cousin Hal's standing there at the door, assisting her to dismount.

"You are not ready, I see," said Miss Vaughan, as Geraldine came up. "Ah! Mr. Amphlett! When did you come?"

"This morning," said Arthur, in his sulkiest tone.

Miss Vaughan was struck by his unusual tone and manner, and put up her eye-glass; looking from him to Geraldine, in that most graceful, affected, and imperturbable way of hers, which would have made an excitable person angry.

"Some family business on hand, I see," she then said. "I am in the way."

"No, if you please, Miss Vaughan," said Geraldine, quickly. "You are necessary here; you also, cousin Henry."

Miss Vaughan made an almost imperceptible movement with her eyebrows, and slightly bowed. Cousin Hal flung back his head, smoothed his moustache, showed his white teeth, and laughed out, "very happy;" but not in quite so confident and merry a voice as usual. Then they all passed through the hall into the library, where Mrs. Amphlett usually sat in the morning. She knew what was coming as soon as they entered in such a strange phalanx. She was pale, and her face looked harder and sterner than ever, with even more than the old fire of secret passion in her fierce eyes. But, for the first time, Geraldine did not quail before them. Mrs. Amphlett felt that the sceptre of her power was falling from her hand.

"What is all this, young lady?" she asked, as Geraldine came near to the table, in advance of the rest. "What is the meaning of the ridiculous air you have assumed this morning? Can *you* explain this comedy?" she said, turning to Miss Vaughan.

"Ma foi, non!" replied that lady, gathering up her riding skirt, and seating herself with singular grace on the sofa, flirting open her little French lorgnon, and

watching the party as steadily as if she were the audience and they actors on the stage.

"It means," began Geraldine, her voice slightly trembling, but from agitation, not timidity; "that you have written to my husband letters concerning me, which it is due to myself to demand — demand —" she repeated, "an explanation of, before those whom you have quoted as witnesses and authorities."

"Good heavens, Arthur! how can you suffer this low-minded young person to degrade you — a gentleman — into complicity with anything so vulgar and improper as this!" said Mrs. Amphlett, angrily. "Was there ever an underbred girl who was not always ready for a scene!" she added, as if making a reflection to herself.

"Leave the question of vulgarity alone," said Geraldine in a new tone of her voice — one of command, "and come to that of truth. I *will* speak," she continued, silencing Mrs. Amphlett by her uplifted hand and dilating eyes; "it is my right, and I will use it."

"Upon my word, this is a natural phenomenon!" sneered Mrs. Amphlett, leaning forward, fixing her eyes on the girl, as if trying to subdue her by her look. But Geraldine was roused; and, like most timid people, was more reckless, more careless of consequences and more impossible to over-bear than the naturally brave and self-assertive. Her latent power of will must have been roused indeed, when it could sweep down Mrs. Amphlett's sternest and angriest opposition.

"You wrote these letters," continued Geraldine, laying her finger on the packet; "and as you have spoken of Miss Vaughan and cousin Henry, I wish them to give Arthur their version of the same stories. Miss Vaughan,"

she said, speaking in the same rapid and positive voice, "did you ever reprove me for undue familiarity with my cousin Henry?" And she read the passage from the letter, referring to Miss Vaughan having crushed Geraldine with one of her lofty looks, because of cousin Hal.

"Why, no," said that lady deliberately, dropping her lorgnon, and unbuttoning her gauntlet gloves; "I do not remember ever speaking to you on the subject; but I certainly did say to Mrs. Amphlett, that I thought it scarcely proper that you should ride so much with Captain Aztler: and indeed, to tell the truth, it was to prevent anything unpleasant being said that I have gone so much with you of late. I thought you were ignorant of the world, and I could not understand your mother's indifference to appearances — or probabilities," she added in the same careless way as she would have spoken of a rent opera cloak or a damaged riding whip.

"Mrs. Amphlett!" cried Geraldine, turning full on her mother-in-law, "was it not you — yourself — who, when I objected to ride alone with my cousin, scolded me for my presumption in holding an opinion contrary to yours? Have you not thrown me into my cousin's way as you would into a brother's? Those were your words: you said he was to be my brother, and that I was to treat him with unreserved affection."

"I am afraid, Aunt Amphlett, that you have been playing rather a double game!" said Harry; whose good-humoured, frank, manly voice came like a charm into the midst of all this tense and nervous feminine excitement. "Arthur," he added, "do you come with me: your wife can stay with Miss Vaughan. Why, bless my soul, man!" he cried, as soon as they were outside the door, "how could you be such a — ahem! well, so weak

as to believe in such obvious misrepensations? Your wife and I have been on kindly friendly terms enough; but, bless my heart! what's that to make a row about? When I came, I saw that she had been regularly bullied since her marriage, and I took her part in a quiet way, and paid her all the attention I could; trying simply to give her self-confidence. But, I hope indeed that I am not so bad a fellow as ever to take advantage of such a young thing's innocence and candour, still less, to plan or plot, as the guest of a relative, for the dishonour and misery of the family. Your mother threw Geraldine (excuse me, you know my way) under my protection entirely. I was astonished at the first; but I have not studied my aunt for all these years, not to be able to understand her now. I soon suspected that something was in the wind by her over-graciousness to me — whom she never liked — and by her flattery of Geraldine — whom I saw she hated. And I was not long in finding out the drift of it all. But she lost her game; for Geraldine had no inclination to flirt with me, nor had I the smallest intention of running away with her." He laughed as if he had said a good thing, and ran his finger through his hair, with a pleasant kind of debonnaire vanity, not at all offensive. "All that nonsense about Geraldine's acting is a perfect fabrication. She was very anxious about you when you did not write, and spoke of all sorts of fears, such as my aunt mentions, truly enough in substance; but she spoke of them in sorrow, not in jest; and Miss Vaughan's anger with her was for her folly in fretting at your silence so much. I felt for the poor little girl, and defended her, and then Miss Vaughan put me down;" and he laughed again. "Certainly she did come across the room — Geraldine,

I mean — and put her hands into mine, and say, 'Thank you, cousin Henry, for your kind championship;' but her eyes were full of tears, and her poor little heart was almost breaking about you."

"I am afraid, Henry, I have been a fool," said Arthur.

Cousin Hal looked grave, and not in the least contradictory.

V.

ARTHUR was humiliated, but still sufficiently generous to acknowledge that he had been in error. He could not apologise, nor enter into any lengthened defence with Geraldine; that would not have been Arthur; but, meeting her in the hall, held out his arms, and, calling her by her name, strained her tenderly to his heart, whispering:

"Will my own true wife forgive me?"

She held up her fresh face and stood on tiptoe to get nearer to him. Arthur had no need to ask again whether she loved him and forgave him.

Arthur's private interview with his mother was more violent. The passions of both were roused, and ran riot. He openly accused her of falsehood, and heaped on her reproaches the most wounding to bear; but they were merited, if harshly worded and not befitting him to make, with such unfilial passion: she, losing dignity, self-respect, maternal feeling, retorted on him with taunts and insinuations that curdled the man's blood round his heart. Of course, Arthur must find a new home for his young wife, she said.

Unfortunately Geraldine entered the room at this climax of the discussion, from the drawing-room, the door of which was open:

"I will not leave this house, Mrs. Amphlett," she exclaimed, passionately. "Thornivale being entailed property, belongs to my husband. I am, therefore, its lawful mistress. You are my guest; I am not your guest."

"Geraldine! Geraldine!" expostulated Arthur.

"Hush!" said the young wife, imperiously. "This affair is mine, not yours. I do not expect you to defend me against your mother. I must defend myself."

With which words she turned away, and passed back into the drawing-room again.

"You are right, Geraldine," said Miss Vaughan, who had heard all that passed, and who was shaken off her stilts, and out of her starch and buckram by the gravity of the scene. "If you leave Thornivale, your character is lost; you need never attempt to show your face in the neighbourhood again."

"I will not leave Thornivale," said Geraldine, positively, and working rapidly at her embroidery, but making nothing but false stitches.

"My wife has spoken the truth, mother," said Arthur. "I would not have said so, even now; but it is the truth."

"Must I abide by it, Arthur?" sneered Mrs. Amphlett. "Must I leave Thornivale for that worthless creature you call your wife? Please yourself with the thought, my boy; for, as I live, you will have nothing *but* the thought!"

"I will have the deed, mother," said Arthur. "Remember! What I assert I generally fulfil. Understand, then, that since you cannot live with my wife in such respectability as you deem due to you, you must leave us. You shall not banish her from hers. I have no more to say; I leave you to think of what I *have* said." Arthur strode into the drawing-room, closing the door after him.

Thus left to herself, old Mrs. Amphlett's passion swept, without check or barrier, through her soul. It was awful to witness. She strode up and down the long oaken library; her hard-drawn breathing was heard in the drawing-room, through all the massive doors and heavy curtains made to shut out louder sounds than a woman's breathing. Her face was distorted; her teeth set, and her hands clenched tightly together; while the "Amphlett cut" in her fore-head was deep, and the brows knotted and swollen. She was more like a panther than a human being, as she raged and chafed in that den-like room; her passionate heart wearing itself fiercely against her fate. That she should have been baffled by such a girl as Geraldine: that her power, her very will, her plans, her words, should all have been torn and scattered to the winds by the simple, ignorant breath of one whom she persisted in believing half an idiot!

Suddenly a heavy fall was heard; Arthur and Geraldine rushed in. They found her lying speechless on the ground, in a fit — a fit produced by passion. Gradually recovering, her eyes turned on Arthur and Geraldine standing near her: Geraldine occupied in some little womanly office about her, and Arthur looking on in genuine distress. She tried to speak, but failed; though she made several attempts. At last a strange unnatural

voice issued from her lips; and, with her fiery eyes still fierce if even somewhat subdued, and her stern black brows still swollen, she said, "Ah! well, you are not quite such a fool as I thought you were;" and, after a short time, adding, "I have almost a respect for you."

Mrs. Amphlett never rallied from this fit. She did not die: but she was never the same woman again, as the servants said. By force she was obliged to let her daughter reign in her stead; she living helpless and inactive in a wheeled chair. She kept up her old privilege of "truth-telling," and was to the last a fierce, cruel, passionate woman; but she treated her daughter-in-law with respect; for Geraldine had received a lesson she never forgot, and, while dutiful and thoughtful and kind and bright, she made both her husband and her mother feel that something had been fairly developed in her nature which could never fail her again. It is a doubt whether Arthur loved her as he loved her when she was more timid and submissive; but he respected her more and treated her with greater consideration. He was his mother's true son, and inherited her nature and temperament, though softened and modified. But, by virtue of this inheritance, he was disposed to tyrannise over the weak, as Geraldine would have found out when the youth of her marriage had fled, had she not changed as has been described; and she could not have changed without some such vital crisis as she had passed through. Thus, on the whole, she got on very well between the fierce old crippled woman and the moody, jealous man. Mrs. Amphlett was never weary of saying "Bless me! I thought that girl a perfect fool, and she has really quite something of a character after all;" and Arthur never dared to hint a jealous thought or to give a gloomy

look when Cousin Hal and his wife — née Miss Vaughan of Croft — came over to Thornivale, and when Cousin Hal made "Gerald" laugh till the tears ran over her eyes, or quoted her before all the world as "the bravest and best little woman living."

END OF VOL. V.



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